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GARDENS

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64 OF THE BEST HARD-WORKING PLANTS

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Children's play areas

Maverick planting
at Hermannshof in Germany

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editor's letter



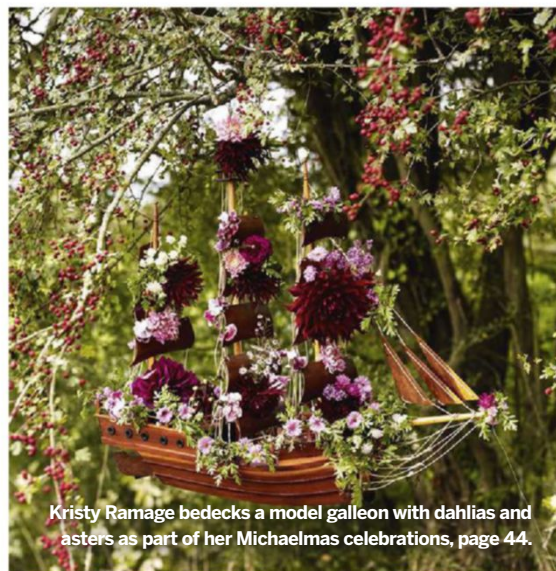
I first met Deryck Body over a decade ago when he was making some beautiful chestnut fencing at Great Dixter in East Sussex. It turns out Deryck is adept at making all sorts of things – from ladders and hurdles to a perfect thatched cottage in miniature for his grandchildren; he can even turn out a tasty home-made pie complete with a pastry pig on top. What I hadn't realised, is that Deryck also keeps a charming garden (see page 32), with

exuberant displays of dahlias and a bountiful veg patch. I'm a keen vegetable grower myself, and love the idea of marking the end of harvest time with a traditional Michaelmas Feast. Designer Kristy Ramage has come up with some charming and highly imaginative ways of celebrating that involve family, friends and lots of fun. As always, you'll find plenty of planting advice running through the magazine: nurserywoman Derry Watkins recommends beautiful plants that offer maximum interest yet require minimum input, and Noël Kingsbury gives his insights into Cassian Schmidt's inspired plant combinations at Hermannshof, an experimental public park in Germany. Finally, it seems that rock gardens are back in fashion. In May we featured Dan Pearson's monumental garden at this year's Chelsea (which went on to be awarded Best in Show), in part inspired by Joseph Paxton's Rockery at Chatsworth; and this issue we explore Peter Berg's design for a steeply sloping garden where he has artfully positioned huge basalt boulders to impressive effect. That's what I love about gardens: endless creativity all sparked by the same passion. I hope you enjoy the issue.



Gardens Illustrated is available as a digital edition – search 'Gardens Illustrated' on the App Store, Google Play or Zinio.com

Juliet



Kristy Ramage bedecks a model galleon with dahlias and asters as part of her Michaelmas celebrations, page 44.



At Hermannshof, years of experimentation have given rise to remarkably clever planting combinations, page 72.

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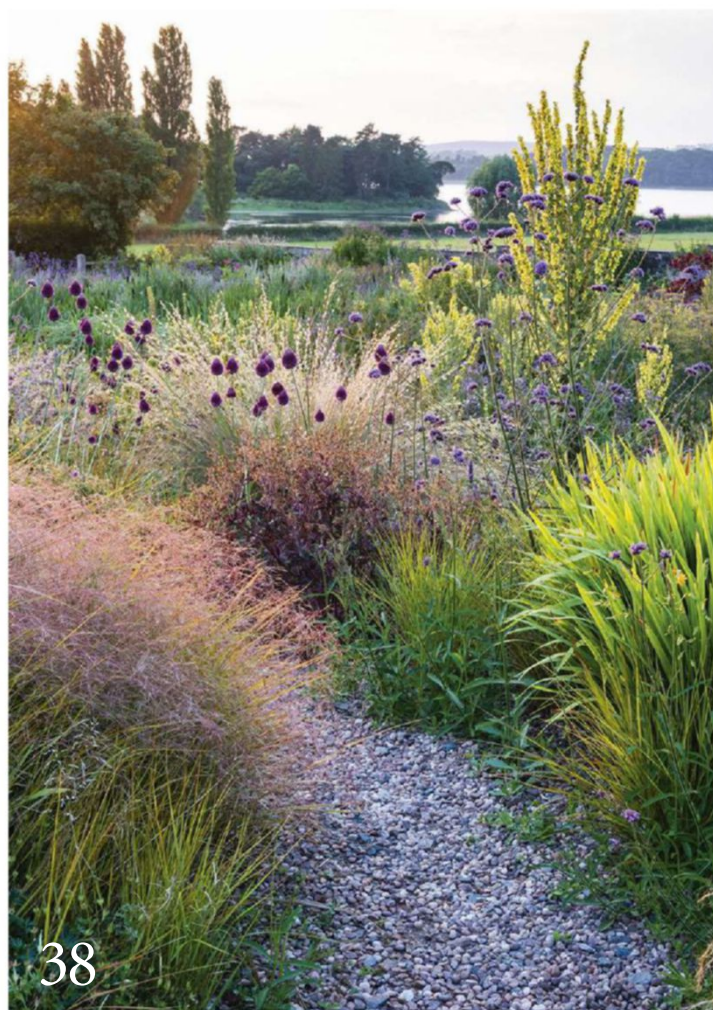
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Kew-trained gardener, author and television presenter.



DAN PEARSON
Garden designer, plantsman and columnist.

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COVER IMAGE

Salvia greggii 'Stormy Pink'
Photography by
Rachel Warne / Gap
Photos

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BRIGITTE PERDEREAU, RACHEL WARNE

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- Save money when you **subscribe to the digital edition** – see page 30



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contributors



KRISTY RAMAGE

Following a degree in illustration, Kristy made automata before turning her passion for gardens into a career by working with garden designer Arne Maynard. On page 44 she looks at some of the old traditions of Michaelmas Day – and comes up with a few original ones of her own.

"What started as a playful delve into Michaelmas traditions rather took us over and became a moving experience."



NOËL KINGSBURY

Noël is a writer and gardener with a keen interest in plant ecology who gardens on the Welsh borders. An enthusiastic proponent of new perennial planting he is an admirer of the planting combinations at Hermannshof in Germany, which he profiles for us on page 72.

"Hermannshof is simply the most beautiful and exciting place to see the future of planting design, especially given its solid research."



CLAIRE TAKACS

Australian garden photographer Claire spends much of her year travelling the world. She feels very lucky to be doing work she loves and enjoys meeting all the inspiring people connected to the garden world. You can see her photographs of the gardens at Hermannshof on page 72.

"I loved visiting and photographing Hermannshof. It's a place I wish I could keep on revisiting throughout the year."



MARIANNE MAJERUS

Photographer Marianne loves September, when the light has a very special quality – perfect for capturing late-summer gardens. This issue she travels to her native Luxembourg to visit an amazing rock garden designed by Peter Berg, and you can see her photographs on page 80.

"Peter has created an inspiring space on a difficult suburban site. It was easy to imagine myself alone on a rocky mountainside."

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Tuesday 1 September 2015

Garden tour at Highgrove

We are delighted to offer readers of *Gardens Illustrated* a second opportunity to attend a special tour of the glorious gardens at Highgrove, the private home of TRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall

Over 35 years in the making, the garden at Highgrove is one of the most creatively inspired in the world. A series of interlinked areas, each with its own character and purpose, weave around the house, reflecting the gardening ideals and organic principles of HRH The Prince of Wales. (You can read about the gardens in our feature in the June 2015 issue.)

As part of a small group on this special tour you will be able to appreciate the seasonal colours and planting of the organic garden in the late afternoon light, accompanied by the sound of bird song in the trees. Following the garden tour, you will be served Highgrove Champagne and delicious canapés as dusk settles over these magical gardens. You will also have the opportunity to visit the Highgrove Estate Shop.

Your visit includes:

- Tea, coffee and biscuits on arrival at 4.45pm.
- A guided tour of the garden lasting approximately two hours.
- Champagne and canapés served on your return from the garden tour.
- 10% discount on any purchases in the Highgrove Estate Shop.
- A Highgrove guide book in a gift box.
- A *Gardens Illustrated* goody bag.

Event details

- **Date** Tuesday 1 September 2015.
- **Venue** Highgrove Garden, Tetbury, Gloucestershire.

PROGRAMME

- **4.45pm** Arrival, refreshments on the terrace.
- **5pm** Tour of the garden.
- **7pm** Highgrove Champagne and canapés served, plus the opportunity to browse the Highgrove Estate Shop.
- **9pm** Approximate finish.

TICKETS

- Tickets cost £95 per person. Places are limited so we recommend booking early to avoid disappointment.

All profits from Highgrove Garden Tours, products and events are donated to HRH The Prince of Wales's Charitable Foundation.

Tickets are non-refundable and cannot be exchanged. We reserve the right to change any element of an event due to circumstances beyond our reasonable control. By attending the event you agree to be photographed and waive all rights, including moral rights, in any photography. Full details will be sent with a confirmation letter.

ANDREW BUTLER

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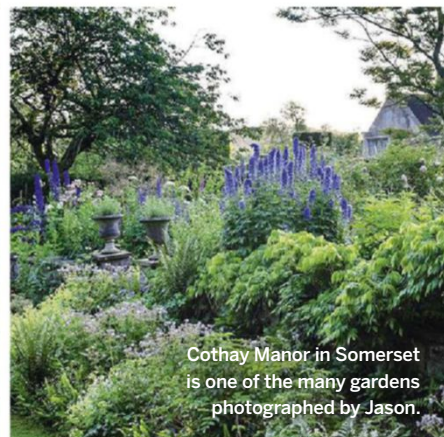
[†] Lines are open Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm. Calls are charged at local rates from UK landlines. Calls from mobiles may cost considerably more.



The gardens at Great Dixter will provide inspiration for your photography day.



Jason will be revealing tricks of the trade and the kit he regularly uses.



Cothay Manor in Somerset is one of the many gardens photographed by Jason.

Monday 12 October 2015

Dixter photography workshop with practical session and guided garden tour

Spend a day at Great Dixter with photographer Jason Ingram improving your garden photography

Knowing some of the tricks of the trade when it comes to garden photography will help enhance your own images so you can show gardens and plants to their best advantage.

Garden photographer Jason Ingram will take you through how to achieve the best images, technical tips on using your camera, recommended kit and ways to improve your images post production. The background to his talk will be the glorious gardens of Great Dixter – created by the late Christopher Lloyd and now under the care of head gardener Fergus Garrett.

In the afternoon you'll head out into the gardens to take your own pictures under Jason's guidance, as well as being given a guided tour of the garden's seasonal highlights by one of the gardening team at Great Dixter.

Your day includes lunch and refreshments and a 10 per cent discount on plants at Great Dixter's excellent nursery (valid on the day only). Following the event, there will be the opportunity for those who attend to submit their best image taken on the day to enter a competition judged by Jason Ingram and *Gardens Illustrated* editor Juliet Roberts.



Jason Ingram is an award-winning garden photographer. He travels widely, photographing not only gardens but also food and people for books and magazines, and his work can regularly be seen in the pages of *Gardens Illustrated*. He was named Garden Photographer of the Year 2013 by the Garden Media Guild.

Event details

- **Date** Monday 12 October 2015.
- **Venue** Great Dixter, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex TN31 6PH.

PROGRAMME

- **10am** Arrival and coffee.
- **10.30am** Talk from Jason Ingram on garden photography.
- **1pm** Lunch in the Great Hall.
- **1.45pm** Practical photography session and tours of the garden.
- **4pm** Tea in the nursery, plus the opportunity to buy plants.

TICKETS

- Tickets cost £100 and must be booked in advance. A transaction fee applies to all bookings.
- Tickets and directions will be sent out prior to the event. Please advise us when booking of any dietary requirements or accessibility queries.
- Find out more about Jason Ingram's work at jasoningram.co.uk. For details about Great Dixter please visit greatdixter.co.uk

We reserve the right to change any element of an event due to circumstances beyond our reasonable control.

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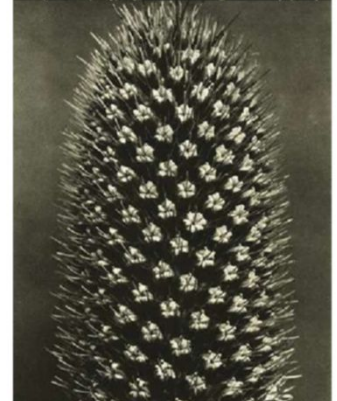
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Dig in

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

NEWS COMPILED BY SORREL EVERTON



EXHIBITION

Plant revelations

German photographer Karl Blossfeldt (1865-1932) is celebrated for his artistic, close-up photographs of plants. Originally trained as a sculptor, Blossfeldt used homemade cameras and lenses to take his pioneering black-and-white images, which highlight the fascinating structures of flowers and leaves, revealing at times their highly sculptural qualities. He is cited as an influence on the Surrealists and Modernists of the early 20th century. You can view 40 of these extraordinary images, taken from Blossfeldt's 1932 portfolio in *Art Forms in Nature*, in a touring exhibition from London's Hayward Gallery. Currently at Bristol's Museum and Art Gallery until 13 September, it moves to Burgh Halls, Linlithgow, outside Edinburgh, from 7 November 2015 – 31 January 2016.

For further details and tour dates visit southbankcentre.co.uk

ALL IMAGES PART OF WUNDERGARTEN NATURE, 1932 © ESTATE OF KARL BLOSSFELDT COURTESY HAYWARD TOURING



EXHIBITION

Eclectic collection

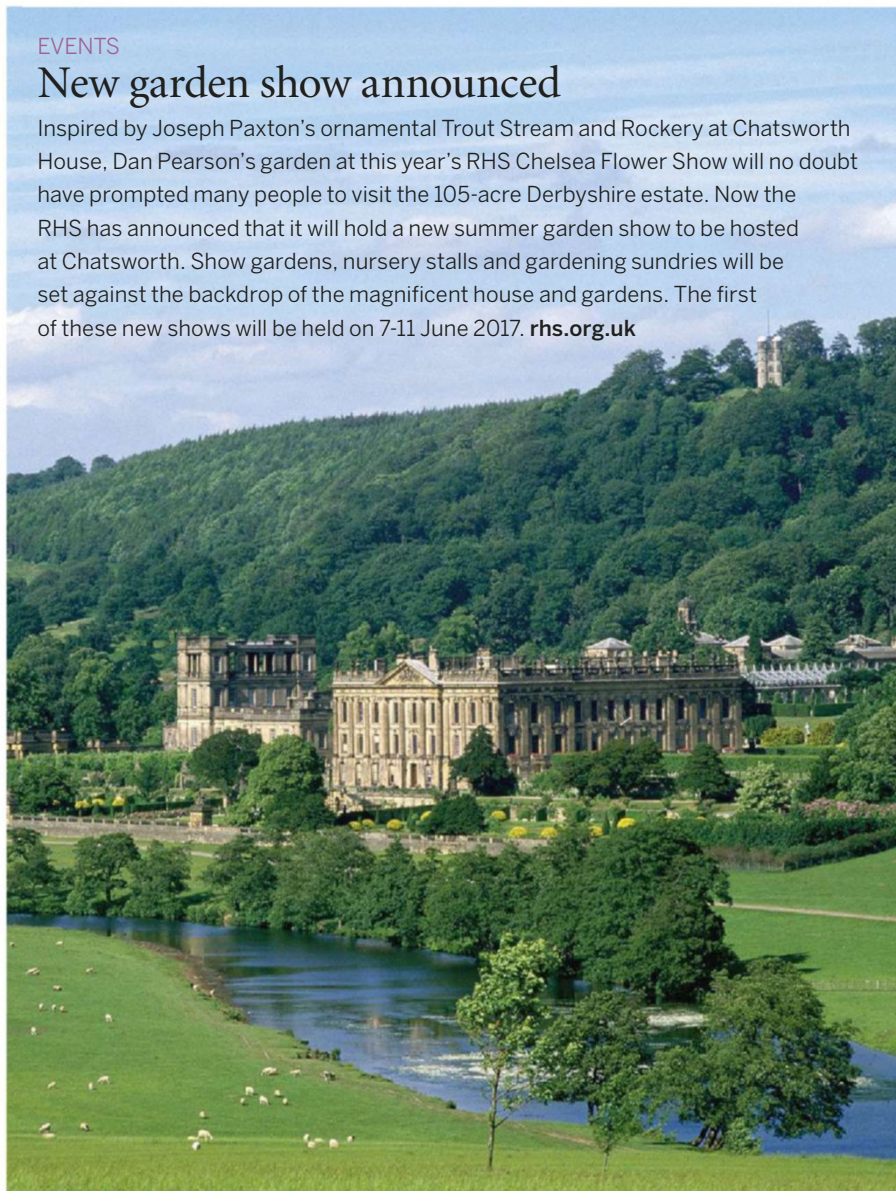
A selection of garden-related objects, artefacts, photographs and art is on view at the Garden Museum in its latest exhibition *Gnome & Away*. It offers visitors the chance to browse the museum's eclectic collection prior to it being packed away and moved off site ready for the museum's redevelopment in 2016. Highlights include the 16th-century *hortus siccus* (book of pressed plants, above) from botanist Dr John Fothergill and a Victorian slide box of flora and fauna assembled by the Veitch family of plant hunters. The exhibition continues until 31 October. Garden Museum, Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB. Tel 020 7401 8865, gardenmuseum.org.uk



EVENTS

New garden show announced

Inspired by Joseph Paxton's ornamental Trout Stream and Rockery at Chatsworth House, Dan Pearson's garden at this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show will no doubt have prompted many people to visit the 105-acre Derbyshire estate. Now the RHS has announced that it will hold a new summer garden show to be hosted at Chatsworth. Show gardens, nursery stalls and gardening sundries will be set against the backdrop of the magnificent house and gardens. The first of these new shows will be held on 7-11 June 2017. rhs.org.uk



NEW PLANTS

Oranges and lemons

Among the highlights of the new plants on offer from mail-order nursery Hayloft are *Baptisia* 'Carolina Moonlight', which has spires of bright yellow, pea-like blooms that flower in late spring/early summer; and *Echibeckia*, a hybrid of *Rudbeckia* and *Echinacea* that flowers all summer long with large, rich-yellow blooms, ringed red in the centre.

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DUTCH CHOCOLATE

Two new shades, 'taupe' and 'cream', were the inspiration for the Schellevis 'Dutch Chocolate' garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show back in May. Award-winning garden and landscape designer Carien van Boxtel took the opportunity to reference the work of Dutch landscape architect Louis le Roy (1924-2012) in her design. Le Roy stacked used pavers without cement in his masterpiece De Ekokathedraal, allowing plants to grow freely, and creating a perfect marriage between natural and man-made material.

Exquisite planting at Chelsea in caramel, cream and brown shades with accents in bright orange – the Dutch national colour – matched the warm chocolate colours of the paving perfectly and some of the flowers even smelt of cocoa, giving the garden a truly mouth-watering look and feel. It proved a hit, catching the eye of garden writer Sarah Raven and described as 'my find of the show' by Dan Martyr of Node Urban Design.

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GROW YOUR OWN

Winter veg box

Once you've harvested your summer crops you'll have space for further plantings of vegetables. Garden expert and BBC Radio 4 *Gardeners' Question Time* regular Pippa Greenwood is offering a 'Winter thru' Spring' collection of garden-ready plants so you can



continue harvesting from winter into spring. The collection includes radicchio, cabbage, purple sprouting broccoli, broad bean, tatsoi, Japanese onion and salad onions, and costs £29. You'll also get regular emails from Pippa giving seasonal tips for growing success.

pippagreenwood.com



CAPABILITY COMPETITION

International Garden Photographer of the Year is inviting keen amateur and professional photographers to submit images for a special award to mark the 'Capability' Brown tercentenary in 2016. Images must be taken in a Capability Brown landscape in England and Wales with a deadline for entries of 31 October 2015. Full rules at igpoty.com. Details on Capability Brown and his gardens at capabilitybrown.org

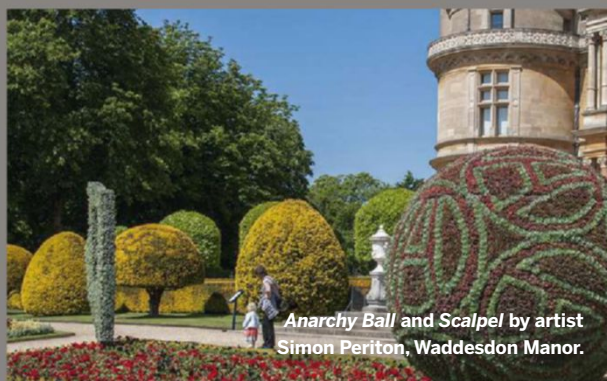
Delight in the detail of dahlia – the stars of the late summer garden – with this tray from designer Bridie Hall. The découpage tray is made from paper and glass and shows a

gorgeous dahlia bloom in red and yellow. 45cm diameter, £180. Pentreath & Hall, 17 Rugby Street, London WC1N 3QT. Tel 020 7430 2526, pentreath-hall.com



Diary

Enjoy summer in the garden with activities and events



Anarchy Ball and Scalpel by artist Simon Periton, Waddesdon Manor.

• Contemporary bedding

This summer, Waddesdon Manor's parterre plays host to two 3D bedding installations by artist Simon Periton. Until October, 10am-5pm. £8. Waddesdon Manor, Aylesbury, Bucks HP18 0JH. Tel 01296 653226, waddesdon.org.uk

• Indian Summer Walk and Bouquet Workshop

Choose your flowers during a morning walk around the Rose Paddock at Real Flower Company founder Rosebie Morton's home, then create two styles of hand-tied bouquet. 4 September, 9am-4pm. £165. Held at Sheep Dip, near Alresford, Hampshire SO24 0LF. Tel 01730 818300, realflowers.co.uk

• Bee and Pollination Festival

Exhibitors give advice on making gardens bee friendly. 5-6 September, 10am-5pm. £3.50. University of Bristol Botanic Garden, Hollybush Lane, Stoke Bishop, Bristol BS9 1JB. Tel 0117 331 4906, bristol.ac.uk/botanic-garden

• Plant Heritage Rare Plant Fair

Plant Heritage is the world's leading garden plant conservation charity. Buy plants from specialist nurseries. 6 September, 10am-5pm. £3. University of

Leicester Botanic Garden, Glebe Road, Oadby, Leicester LE2 2NE. Tel 0116 271 2933, www2.le.ac.uk/institution/botanic-garden

• Seeing Floral – The Art of Florilegia workshop

Explore nature via the techniques of observing, recording, collecting and pressing plants to create your own florilegia. 7 September, 10am-4pm. £85. The Garden Museum, Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB. Tel 020 7401 8865, gardenmuseum.org.uk

• Alitex annual lecture with Matthew Wilson

Garden designer, writer and broadcaster Matthew Wilson talks about his time at RHS Hyde Hall and Harlow Carr as curator, and how these two gardens shaped his future. 10 September, 7pm. £10. Alitex HQ, Torberry Farm, South Harding, Petersfield, Hants GU31 5RG. Tel 01730 826900, alitex.co.uk

• Petersham Wild Food Walk with chef Claudio Bincoletto

Discover the joy of foraging on this wild food walk. 20 September, 9.30am-12pm. £35. Petersham Nurseries, Church Lane, Richmond, Surrey TW10 7AB. Tel 020 8940 5230, petershamnurseries.com



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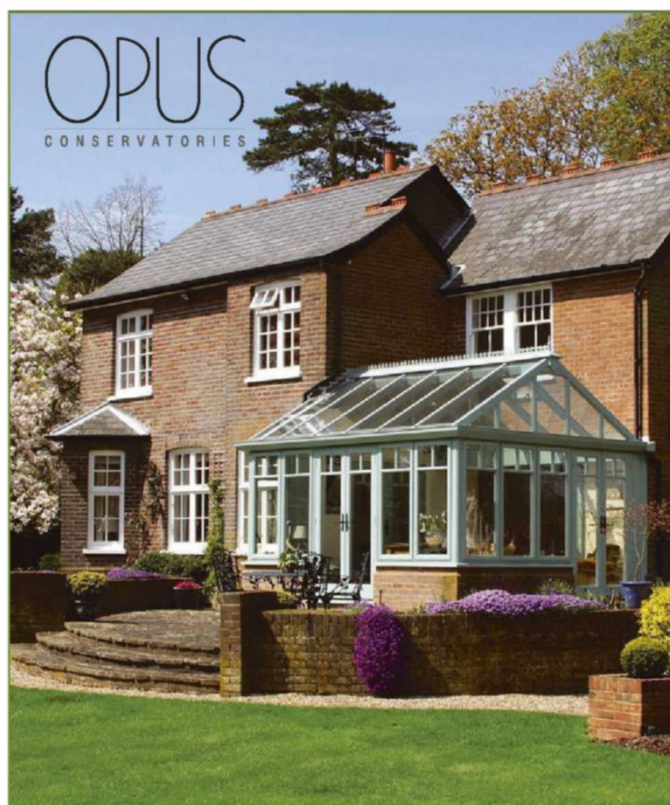
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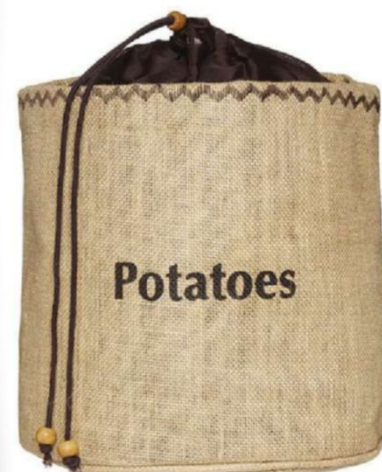
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Anemone x hybrida 'Anne Rose'

This may seem like just another autumn anemone, but it has one big advantage: it quickly forms a mat of relatively small, deep-green leaves making it a great choice for ground cover. I got this from a friend in Germany who named it after her mother, and it really is very cute. From September onwards it produces rose-pink flowers with alternate light and dark petal-like sepals, which gives a most pleasant effect. There are several low-growing anemones on the market at the moment, although most, annoyingly, are patented. This one is free for everybody to propagate.

Height 40cm.

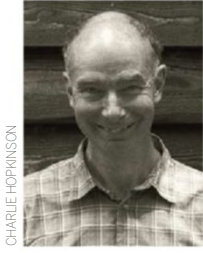
Growing conditions Humus-rich soil; sun or part shade.

Hardiness At least RHS H6⁺.

Origin China.

Season of interest Summer – autumn.





CHARLIE HOPKINSON

September plants

Hans shares his selection of unusual late-flowering blooms that will help provide plenty of colour as summer begins to fade into autumn

WORDS HANS KRAMER PHOTOGRAPHS MAAYKE DE RIDDER

Hans Kramer co-owns Kwekerij De Hessenhof in the Netherlands. hessenhof.nl



Dactylicapnos macrocapnos

Somehow this plant had a lot more appeal when we could call it a climbing dicentra, but hey what's in a name? It's still a good plant. Put it in a semi-shaded corner, preferably with some small shrubs, and you'll have a superb show from July to September. In spring it looks dead, but come May the shoots push up, bearing delightfully silver-laid leaves. Then in July the first yellow flowers emerge and, once they do, you'll recognise it immediately, despite its name, as a bleeding heart. To be safe, cover the roots with some leaf mould before winter.

Height 5m.

Growing conditions Humus-rich soil that's not too dry; part shade.

Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.

Origin Himalayas.

Season of interest Summer – autumn.

Phlox paniculata 'Herbstwalzer'

One of several cultivars bred by Peter zur Linden, who included *P. amplifolia* in his breedings. This produced later-flowering phloxes that have a greater resistance to mildew. I've never seen any sign of mildew on this one, even on older plants. In late autumn the leaves are as green and shiny as grass, but you barely notice them, for the masses of pink, spherical heads. Its German name translates as 'autumn waltz', which captures some of the lightness you feel when you witness a clump in full flower.

Height 1.2m.

Growing conditions Regular garden soil; sun.

Origin Bred in Germany.

Hardiness RHS H7.

Season of interest Summer – autumn.



Actaea simplex 'Satin Darkness'

This is a cultivar we bred ourselves. We've been trying to improve purple-leaved actaeas for more than 12 years (when we started they were still known as cimicifugas). We began trying to breed a pink-flowered one (we've yet to succeed), but in the process found that seedlings with a more metallic, purple colour have a thicker leaf texture than the brownish red ones and are also more resistant to heat and drought. This cultivar has shiny purple leaves that thrive in full sun. Enjoy it and propagate it.

Height 1.6m.

Growing conditions Good soil; sun or part shade.

Hardiness RHS H7.

Origin Bred in the Netherlands.

Season of interest Autumn.

[†]Hardiness ratings given where available.



Satureja rumelica 'Purpurea'

Satureja really deserve to be more widely known. This low-growing, sub shrub flowers profusely from early autumn through to October, providing masses of nectar. In western Europe *S. montana*, or winter savory, is quite well known, but in southeast Europe you'll find more interesting species, and *S. rumelica* is one of the best. Some cultivars, including 'Splendens', and 'Purpurea', have been around for almost 100 years, and are definitely worth looking out for, especially if you have a dry bank on a calcareous soil.

Height 20cm.

Growing conditions Most well-drained soils, including poor calcareous soil; sun.

Hardiness RHS H7.

Origin Bulgaria.

Season of interest Autumn.

Vernonia angustifolia *x missurica*

Vernonias are similar in appearance to eupatoriums, but can be a better choice if your soil is on the dry side. One other big advantage is that most don't grow as large. There are numerous vernonias with very broad, coarse leaves, almost like a nettle. I prefer the narrow-leaved ones, especially those with darker stems. Then the plant looks far more architectural and the flowers are more conspicuous. This dark-stemmed cross, which doesn't flop and has a filigreed look, arose naturally on our nursery and deserves to be named.

Height 1.6m.

Growing conditions Any soil; sun.

Hardiness RHS H7.

Origin North America.

Season of interest Autumn.



Calamagrostis emodensis

With pendulous, cotton-like plumes, this Himalayan grass looks a little like a small, New Zealand *Cortaderia*, but with one noticeable difference: it is fully hardy. As far as I know, it is also the only *Calamagrostis* to have an inclined inflorescence. When they first appear, the plumes have a slight pinkish undertone, but as they develop they become fluffier and acquire a silvery brown hue. It's a grass that will continue to look attractive long into autumn, and the plumes will stay intact for most of the winter, provided they're not laden with heavy rain. Here on our sandy soil it seeds lightly.

Height 1m.

Growing conditions Normal soil; full sun.

Hardiness RHS H6.

Origin Himalayas.

Season of interest Autumn.

Places to visit

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best, both here in the UK and in mainland Europe.

The remarkable **Lianne's Siergrassen** nursery in the north of the Netherlands, includes an extensive prairie show garden designed to inspire visitors to use grasses creatively. Here you can walk through huge borders of prairie planting, themed around colour and height, combined with around 350 species of grass. This autumn the nursery is celebrating its



15th anniversary with a series of special events from 28 August to 6 September, and two grass days on 3-4 October. Jan Gosseswijk 31, 9367 TE De Wilp (Gn), the Netherlands. Tel +31 (0)594 644263, siergras.nl

Nearer to home you'll find inspiring grass planting at **Scampston Walled Garden** in North Yorkshire. Designed by the renowned Dutch plantsman Piet

Colchicum 'William Dykes'

I especially like this *Colchicum*. It is a lovely lilac-pink colour with an attractive white centre. The flower is quite small and has a tendency to collapse following an autumn shower so you'll need to combine it with another plant, preferably one that can give it some support. In the wild, you often see it growing in among grass, so here we combine it with *Carex alba*, as you can see below. This charming grass from Eastern Europe has linear, bright-green hummocks and is the perfect companion for the *Colchicum*.

Height 30cm.

Growing conditions Light soil with good drainage; sun.

Hardiness RHS H7.

Origin Turkey, Iran, Caucasus.

Season of interest Summer – autumn.



Doellingeria umbellata
'Weisser Schirm'

I fear this plant won't sell quite as well now we can no longer call it an aster, which is a shame because it's a great plant. It's both taller and sturdier than most asters and in September its lance-shaped leaves are fully covered with flattened clusters of star-shaped flowers. Unlike the straight species, this cultivar, with its reddish brown-tinted stems does not flop on heavy soil. It is the perfect back-of-the-border plant, and on our plot looks stunning with dark-blue autumn *Aconitum* in the foreground.

Height 1.8m.

Growing conditions Any soil with good drainage; sun.

Hardiness RHS H7.

Origin North America.

Season of interest Summer – autumn.



Sphaeralcea incana

It's surprising this excellent plant isn't better known, especially given how few hardy, orange-flowered perennials there are. The orange cups are small, but so many are formed in the leaf axils that it burns with colour, and the flower show goes on and on until the first frost. Not only is it hardy but it's also extremely drought tolerant. In fact, if your plant is in good shape there's a strong possibility it may become invasive. We have one that now flowers inside our greenhouse after its underground suckers found their way beneath the greenhouse's foundations.

Height 1.2m.

Growing conditions Light soil with good drainage; sun.

Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.

Origin North America, Mexico.

Season of interest Summer – autumn.

Oudolf, the contemporary garden features modern, perennial meadow planting alongside more traditional areas. Scampston Hall, North Yorkshire YO17 8NG. Tel 01944 759111, scampston.co.uk

The walled kitchen garden at **Kelmarsh Hall** this month hosts its second Dahlia Festival. Last year's introduced 20 new cultivars, and this year promises to be

equally exciting for dahlia lovers, with dahlia-themed talks and demonstrations and the chance to browse stalls and buy dahlias. 6 and 27 September. £8. Kelmarsh Hall and Gardens, Kelmarsh, Northamptonshire NN6 8NL. Tel 01604 686543, kelmarsh.com

More dahlias will be on show at the **RHS Garden Wisley** flower show where the National Dahlia Society is



Kelmarsh Hall of Oxford Botanic Garden

SARAH VIVIANE PHOTOGRAPHY

organising its annual show within a show. You'll be able to see more than 100 dahlia exhibitors vying for the top prize with their spectacular blooms, as well as all the specialist nurseries and quality trade stands of the RHS event. 8-13 September (although dahlia show ends 11 September), 9am-6pm. £12. RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB. Tel 08452 609000, rhs.org.uk



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To ensure a good crop of future gardeners,
first take one school garden and cultivate it diligently

WORDS JOJO TULLOH ILLUSTRATIONS SARAH YOUNG

The third garden in my life (aside from my allotment and the one attached to our house) is the one I am most proud of: the garden in the playground of our local primary school in Hackney, east London. It is worked by me and another mother, the children in our after-school gardening club and, most significantly, by our school gardener Stephen Mason, who comes in one day a week to maintain the garden (beautifully) and also teach the children about all things ecological. The beauty and fruitfulness of the garden is down to him (we mostly mess it up), but the teaching part is key. In these times of swingeing cuts, school gardens will only survive if they offer educational value for money.

As well as 11 raised beds, in which we grow a variety of edibles and flowers, we have a small orchard planted two years ago. It has six heritage apple trees, two plums and a strip of native hedgerow plants including medlars, hazel and rowan trees and, rather randomly, two blackcurrants. Four chickens, hatched out at school, scratch in a run beside the trees. It offers children a quiet space and a little bit of the natural world in a playground surrounded by high-density housing. The orchard has not yet cropped much (last year the blossom and tiny fruits were too tempting for tiny fingers). Plenty comes in the form of

an enormous 25m-high cooking apple tree, a legacy of Hackney's market-garden past. The problem is how to get the apples down.

The Yorkshire vicar William Lawson (1553-1635) wrote two of the 17th century's best-known books on gardening, *The Country Housewife's Garden* and *A New Orchard and Garden*. In the latter he gives detailed instruction on how to run an orchard and describes various useful apparatus for picking: 'A gathering apron like a poak before you, made of a purpose, or a wallet hung on a bough, or a basket with a sieve bottom, or skin bottome, with lathes or splinters under, hung in a rope to pull up and down.' I found some great modern versions in the USA (available from durokon.com) – padded nylon bucket bags that strap to your back. The most helpful tool available here seems to be the Wolf Fruit Picker, a net bag with a scalloped plastic edge that you can attach to a telescopic handle.

Lawson's advice on picking for storing is: 'Gather your fruit when it is ripe, and not before, else will it wither, and be tough and sower. All fruits generally are ripe when they begin to fall.' Aside from looking out for unblemished fruit dropping, you can also cup the apple and twist gently to see if it will disengage. Try and get them all down by the end of October when high winds and frosts threaten. ▶

THINGS TO DO NOW

- The heat of the summer (plus your careful turning) should have cooked your compost beautifully. Now is the time to dig it out and spread it over empty beds or store it in rubble sacks for use later on. This will give you plenty of space to start laying down the excess plant matter generated as you clear

summer crops of potatoes, beans and pumpkins.

- If you have grown lots of root vegetables (carrots, potatoes, turnips, beetroots and swedes) consider making a clamp to store them. If you have a cool shed, cellar or garage you can twist off the greens and bury the

roots in boxes of sand. A traditional method is to make what looks like a mini long barrow. Lay a bed of straw, pile up the veg in a pyramid, cover with more straw than a layer of earth, and make straw chimneys out of bundles of stalks, left sticking out roughly a metre apart at the top and along the bottom.

- If you're looking for good cold-tolerant winter greens to be eaten raw or cooked, sow a few oriental greens. The Real Seed Catalogue (realseeds.co.uk) has many. Three I'm trying are the mustard spinach 'Komatsuna', and mustard greens 'Osaka Purple' and the milder 'Dragon's Tongue'.



'I should sugar and preserve my days like fruit,' wrote Sylvia Plath in her poem *Last Words*. It's a good motto for this time of year when both hedgerow and garden plot are equally full to bursting with fruits that need to be transformed into something longer lasting. We grow the medlar (*Mespilus germanica*) in our school orchard. It is an unusual fruit, small and round, ripening to a glossy rough russet colour with a central rough 'eye' framed by five sepals. The jelly made from this fruit is sharp and would go well with game or smoked fish. To be eaten raw, the fruit must be bletted (in an overripe condition), but the jelly requires only that you cut the fruit into four, barely cover with water and then stew until soft. Put the fruit in a jelly bag and allow to drip overnight before boiling up at the ratio of 500g sugar to 600ml juice until the setting point is reached, and then seal in sterilised jars.

If you haven't grown the complex parsley and celery-ish tasting herb lovage (*Levisticum officinale*) then do sow some now (it needs cold to trigger germination). If you do have it then consider making a herb salt for winter use. Use it in soups or to add a verdant note to winter salads of smoked fish and peppery leaves, or on a Swedish *smørrebrød* (open sandwich) of brown bread, sliced boiled egg and radish. Pick a large bunch of fresh looking leaves on a warm

This time of year both hedgerow and garden plot are equally full to bursting with fruits that need to be transformed into something longer lasting

dry day and blend with 200g sea salt, push through a sieve to get rid of any fibres and then freeze until required. You can also stick a section of hollow lovage stem in a Bloody Mary and later use the seeds in a flour mix for bread.

Damsons make a very good jelly but you can also make a terrific vodka with them – laid down now it will be ready for Christmas. You

need 1kg damsons, 500ml of vodka, sugar to taste and a couple of large preserving jars, sterilised in the oven. Wash the damsons and remove any that are mouldy or damaged. Pack them into the jars, stopping about 6cm from the top, and cover with vodka. Put in a cupboard and give the jar a shake when you remember. Four months later, strain the contents through a jelly bag, wringing it to squeeze out maximum juice. Add the sugar bit by bit, stopping when it tastes good to you. Put the jar back in the cupboard, shaking every other

day for at least two weeks. It's ready when the liquid is clear and the sugar has completely dissolved. Strain into sterilised bottles.

If you want your alcoholic hit now, make a purée from cooked and sieved damsons sweetened with sugar, then take a teaspoon of the mixture and put it in the bottom of a glass of sparkling wine, using as you would cassis to make a Kir Royale. □

RECIPES

Three classic plum and almond tarts

Try these if you have lots of plums or pluots (juicy apricot/plum hybrid). The first tart is very rich and the first two require a shortcrust pastry shell baked blind (225g pastry in 20-22cm tart tin).

- Make a rich, stiff almond paste of 200g each of sugar, coarsely ground almonds and butter whizzed up with 4 egg yolks, 1tbsp lemon zest and

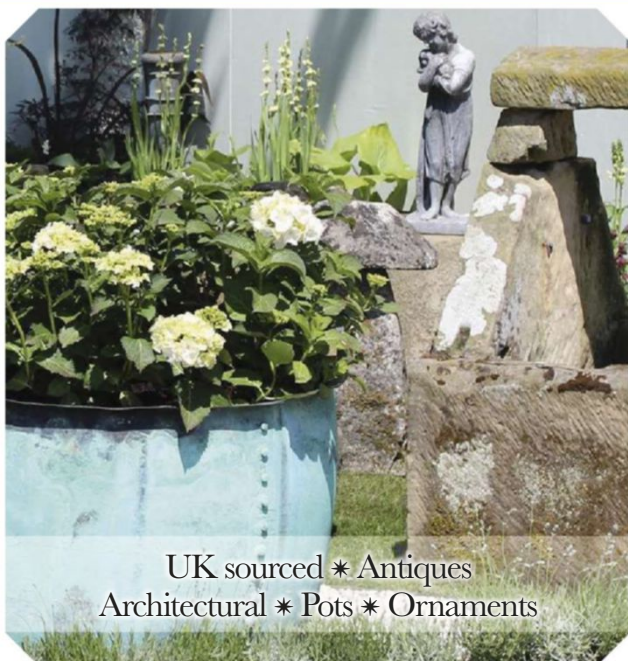
- ½ vanilla pod's seeds. Spoon this filling into the pastry case, smooth it and then arrange 16-20 plum halves: place one in the centre cut side up and make two further rings of plums. Bake for 30-45 minutes at 190°C, and cover loosely with foil if browning too fast.

- A less rich version is made with 10-15 plums halved and placed closer together cut side up in the pastry case

before carefully pouring this light almond batter around the fruit. Blend 50g caster sugar, 50g butter, 1 egg, beaten and 50g ground almonds. Bake as above for 30 minutes.

- Third and easiest everydaytart: roll your pastry out on a tray lined with parchment and spread this mixture on top, leaving a 2cm border: combine 2tbsp sugar, 1tbsp ground almonds

and 1tbsp flour. Arrange on top 500g plums stoned and cut into crescents. Sprinkle the fruit with 3tbsp sugar then roll over and crimp the pastry sides, brush them with melted butter and sprinkle with sugar, before baking at 180°C for 35 minutes or until the fruit is tender and the pastry a deep golden brown. Allow to cool, then brush with melted jam (optional).



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Andrea Brunsendorf

Meet the head gardener at London's Inner Temple, the first woman to hold the position in the garden's 800-year history, who is overseeing a major regeneration

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest garden memory Being in my grandparents' garden. I used to sit and count solitary wasps as they went in and out of a hole in the rockery. And I would earn a penny for every potato beetle I caught.

First plant love I did an apprenticeship with a seed production company and became fascinated by annuals. Seeds are the beginning of everything and an annual demonstrates this really powerfully.

Your career I left Germany at 18 after my apprenticeship in horticulture to study at Kirstenbosch, South Africa. I then went to Longwood Gardens in the USA and later trained at Kew before coming to Inner Temple.

Horticultural heroes Nurserymen – it's so incredibly hard to succeed in this business and yet these are the people who bring plants to us, develop new plants and show us how it should be done.

Worthwhile tips for every gardener Don't take it too seriously – there's always another season; be patient, an idea will take time to develop and mature and then it will probably need to be tweaked.

Dream plant destination You should have seen my face when I first saw a protea in South Africa. But I'd really like to visit Baja California where the plants are so well adapted to the harsh coastal environment.

Favourite planting style Naturalistic, but without moving too far from the traditional herbaceous border. I have colours and shapes in mind but like to plant intuitively and bring a new twist to the planting.

Biggest challenge facing gardeners today Climate change without a doubt. We need to look out now for plants that will cope with the change to dry and windy conditions and we need to get the public on board in understanding the changes we need to make.

What principles have guided your attitude to gardening I want to create gardens that put a smile on people's faces. Gardens should be places of enjoyment and sharing.

What heartens you about horticulture today? The fact that there are now younger people coming in to the profession and actively choosing horticulture as a career. We need lots more of them though.

Ever done anything crazy in the name of horticulture? When I was in South Africa I was obsessed with caudiciform plants to the extent that when we were on safari, I dashed off to a clump of scrub to check out a specimen just after some lions had passed by. A bit risky!

Contact abrunsendorf@innertemple.org.uk

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Dahlias, including the giant pink 'Emory Paul', dominate the colourful cottage garden of retired farmer and craftsman Deryck Body, who made the cottage's chestnut gate.

In brief

What Productive farmhouse garden.

Where Kent.

Size One acre.

Soil Fine grained, alluvial and fertile.

Climate Mild with risk of flooding.

Hardiness rating USDA 8.

A life outdoors

At 87, retired farmer Deryck Body still spends every day in his garden and is as resourceful and as enthusiastic as ever, whether he's making fences to keep the sheep off his flowerbeds or growing fruit for jam

WORDS FRANCINE RAYMOND PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WARNE





Deryck fills his borders with a lively mix of plants, including the bronze-leaved pink dahlia 'Fascination', the white, daisy-flowered *Leucanthemella serotina* and *Sedum spectabile* with its large, flat, pink umbels.

I followed my instructions to reach Deryck Body's garden on the edge of Romney Marsh: drive slowly down the lane and look out for multi-coloured dahlias singing loudly over a well-trimmed hedge. And there was Deryck, a retired farmer, standing tall despite his advanced years, surrounded by shoulder-high flowers: "the best ever this year, from the tulips onwards".

It's this enthusiasm that keeps most gardeners carrying on gardening but few to such great effect as Deryck. And it isn't just flowers that keep him busy; he grows his own vegetables and herbs, looks after a large orchard and nuttree with a soft fruit cage, runs a few sheep – four calm ewes – to keep the grass down, a few hens for eggs, and on the other side of the orchard, there's a large asparagus bed.

In the farming world, the garden was traditionally woman's work. His mother was a plantswoman, and Deryck's wife Betty was in sole charge of the flowers and veg beds. Sadly, and suddenly, Betty died in 2001, and so Deryck took over her garden, finding solace among her plants. He has taught himself the names of the flowers, and although he has always loved making things grow, he prefers the more practical things of life. But the flowerbeds are seen from the road, so he felt obliged to keep them looking lively.

Deryck was brought up in this farmhouse. He left to build his own house down the road and moved in with his new wife, but came back 25 years later when his older son got married, so he has known this spot all his life. Set back from the road, the front garden is pretty much

the same width as the house, with beds to either side of the front path, and a tradesmen's entrance round to the back door, screened by a low clipped hedge. The rest is a kitchen garden fenced with chestnut paling to keep out the woolly mowers; a large collection of fruit and nut trees; and tucked behind, an exquisite little thatched cottage built by Deryck for his grandchildren, using only tools that would have been in use in the 18th century, with its own tiny cottage garden.

The soil is ancient and alluvial. Romney Marsh has been cultivated since the 13th century for the Archbishops of Canterbury, and this area was drained in 1804 to create the Royal Military Canal. The acre plot would have sustained a farmer's family. After Deryck passed his farm on to his sons, he started thatching local barns and cottages, using his own strain of long straw wheat. He made his own ladders – some 40 rungs tall – cut cleft chestnut fences, hurdles and gates, and became famous in the neighbourhood for his workmanship. In his late seventies, he visited Great Dixter (once farmed by one of his relations) to cap the woodshed's roof, and met Christopher Lloyd. They famously disagreed about cutting back the fig tree that was in the way, and Lloyd stamped off grumbling: "I'm not going to be told what to do by that young whippersnapper." A happy compromise was reached.

He has continued his relationship with Great Dixter. Head gardener Fergus Garrett says that everything about Deryck comes from a bygone age: a lovely world we'd all like to live in. "He massively influenced our decision to turn the Great Barn ▷



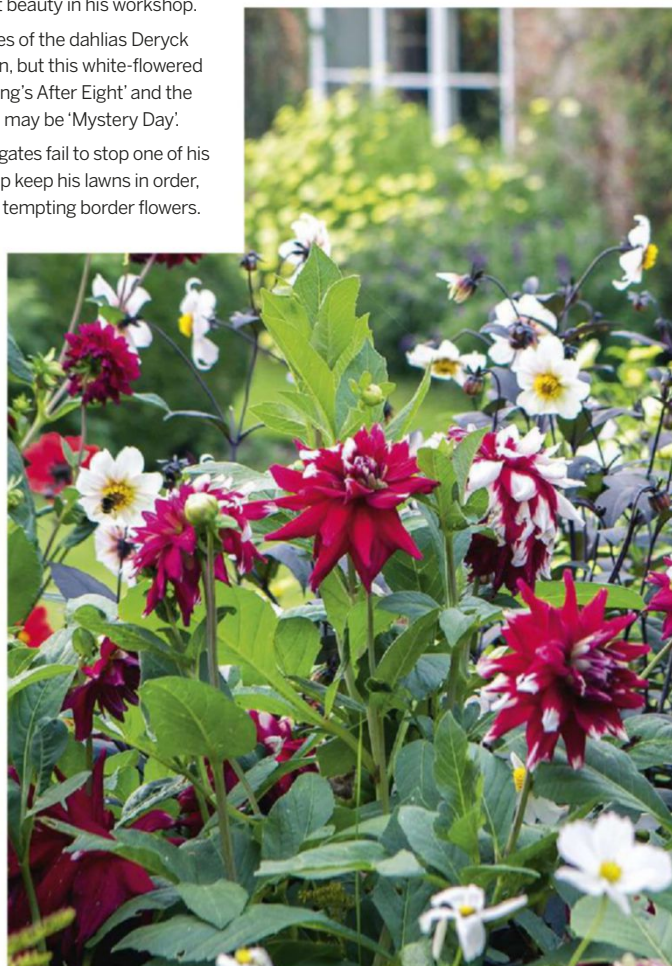
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Deryck's borders are filled with a sunny mix of cottage garden favourites, with the vibrant pink of tall *Dahlia* 'Emory Paul', the deep-red of *D.* 'Summer Nights' and yellow of *D.* 'Knockout' muted by blue delphiniums.

At 87, Deryck Body still spends most of his days outside tending his colourful garden and making everyday objects of great beauty in his workshop.

Over the years the names of the dahlias Deryck grows have been forgotten, but this white-flowered dahlia is probably 'Twynning's After Eight' and the raspberry ripple dahlia may be 'Mystery Day'.

Sometimes even Deryck's gates fail to stop one of his Romney sheep, which help keep his lawns in order, from trying to sample the tempting border flowers.





Deryck's mostly productive vegetable plot, where he grows sprouts, kale, beans and onions for the kitchen table, also has room for colour provided by yet more dahlias.

▷ into a classroom for country skills,” says Fergus. “And he helped us set up samples and examples of how woods and greenwoods can be turned into necessary everyday objects of great beauty. I have immense respect for everything Deryck makes: from the way his gates work to his rook pie; and for his understanding of the land he works, of his animals, of wood, everything he turns his hand to. It’s a privilege to visit the farmhouse, and be briefly part of his world, to be informed by his knowledge and touched by his friendship.”

The list of what Deryck is both willing and able to turn his hand to goes on and on and even stretches to milling his own flour from the farm’s strain of long straw wheat, which we were lucky enough to sample on our visit. Our tea of home-baked rolls with greengage jam – homemade, of course – a boiled fruitcake, made with sultanas soaked in cider from the farm, and walnut slices was delicious. Waiting for Deryck on the sideboard was a pie for supper made with home-raised pork and orchard apples cooked in homemade cider.

Anything he needs, Deryck makes himself using bits he has. He believes that progress generally has landed us in a pretty poor predicament but happily lives to work – unlike so many of us who work to live. He gets up with the birds – “How can you not?” he asks – and spends his days outside or, when the weather is bad, in his workshop. One of the last of a generation, Deryck Body leads a life that hasn’t changed, in an industry he barely recognises, but he has the satisfaction of having passed his time more profoundly productively than most, in one of the loveliest of gardens. □

Deryck’s lore

- Deryck keeps beds weed free with a sharp swan-necked hoe, so he doesn’t have to weed on hands and knees.
- He deadheads daily to encourage flowering.
- He keeps his hedges (and topiary) in shape with a sickle or brush hook that’s “as sharp as anything”, trimming little and often so new growth never gets woody.
- He spins his sheep’s wool on a homemade wheel. I was shown bags of the softest wool, some dyed with young forsythia leaves for a yellow hue.
- Clothes are line-dried in the garden and hung with pegs handmade of split grey willow cut below a node. The wood is as smooth as silk and won’t snag clothes.
- Deryck makes everything himself. When he and Betty moved into the farmhouse, they couldn’t find their nutcracker. Deryck made one from a gutter bracket, which he still uses.
- Dahlias are left in the soil with their stalks as markers and mulched deep to protect their tubers from frost – in colder areas they should be lifted and stored.
- Sheep keep grass down in this garden. Geese, says Deryck, are also good for this, but they are messier, noisier, and often more aggressive.
- Deryck makes full use of local fruits and nuts; the farm still makes cider from the orchard apples and Deryck used to make cherry wine from tiny bird cherries in local orchards.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Deryck still spends much of his day in his workshop, making what he needs with green woodworking techniques that have been used for centuries.

This tiny, half-timbered, thatched cottage, built by Deryck for his grandchildren, has an air of fairy-tale magic thanks in no small part to its scaled-down colourful cottage garden.

Both the traditional ladder and the chestnut fencing it leans against were made by Deryck. The fence surrounds of a highly productive cider apple orchard.

One of Deryck's chestnut gates creates a dividing line between his vegetable plot and a flower garden filled with various dahlias, including the burnt-orange 'David Howard' and pale-yellow 'Inca Spectrum'.





In brief

Name Holt Farm.

What Contemporary organic ornamental garden.

Where Somerset.

Size Six and a half acres.

Soil Heavy clay.

Climate Lots of rain, strong prevailing winds across the lake, frost pocket.

Hardiness rating USDA 8.

Down on the farm

Holt Farm in Somerset is the original home of the Yeo Valley Organic Dairy and is now the site of a stunning organic garden that reflects the effervescent personality of owner Sarah Mead

WORDS LIA LEENDERTZ PHOTOGRAPHS BRIGITTE PERDEREAU

The gravel garden at Holt Farm is packed with exuberant plants that spill out across the paths, including *Stachys byzantina*, the orange day lily *Hemerocallis fulva* and *Allium sphaerocephalon*.



Driving down leafy lanes past numerous dairy buildings to Yeo Valley's organic garden at Holt Farm, I rather anticipated finding something on-message and in the new-organic-corporate style: chunky wood perhaps, rows of gleaming vegetables certainly, maybe a little earnest signage. And on one level Holt Farm fits this mould – it is one of only a handful of ornamental gardens in the country that is Soil Association accredited, which chimes with the dairy's right-on principles. But this was a private garden first and has a strong personality of its own, one with masses of swagger and very little in the way of worthy hand-wringing.

Decisions are made jointly between the garden's owner, Sarah Mead, garden designer Eileen O'Donnell and head gardener James Cox, but Sarah always has the final say. "The gardens that I love are those that have a character behind them: Hadsden when Sandra and Nori Pope were there, Christopher Lloyd at Great Dixter, Roy Strong at The Laskett." Sarah's personality is laid bare in the garden's

theatricality. "I like impact and drama," she says. "I am never going to show you a border of 25 different galanthus, but I might show you a field packed full of them."

The visitor's first sense of this comes in the Red and Lime Beds, a small, hedged garden room beyond the vegetable garden. The borders here are filled with mass plantings of a few plants with impact: euphorbias and poppies in early summer, dahlias and grasses by September. "I like repetition," says Sarah. "I just pick a scheme and go for it. And I walk around like the Queen of Hearts looking for flowers that pop up in the wrong shade: 'Off with their heads!'"

Sarah was not a gardener when she arrived at Holt Farm. She was training as a dancer in London when she met her husband Tim, son of Roger and Mary Mead who owned Holt Farm, and who first started making yoghurt here. "My parents-in-law moved to a house in the village and I inherited Mary's beautiful garden, which was fiercely trendy for the time, all rockeries and shrubberies. I had a quick descent

This page, clockwise from top left

Winds sweep across the garden from Blagdon Lake, however, it forms a beautiful and dramatic backdrop.

In the Gravel Garden many plants, such as *Verbena bonariensis*, seed themselves around and are anchored by accent plants, including the tree *Robinia hispida* var. *kelseyi*.

The Bronze Garden features a dramatic black pond and plants in orange, bronze and buff. A gap in the hedge leads through to the Big Grass Bed.





This page, clockwise from left

The vegetable garden combines aesthetics and productivity, and supplies the Yeo Valley Garden Café. Colourful leafy plants and low box hedging grown in diagonal rows are a major feature.

The unusual wrought iron gate to the vegetable garden was created by local artisan James Blunt.

Coreopsis tinctoria flowers en masse in the annual meadow in September.

into complete and utter obsession and spent all my time reading books and visiting gardens, working out what I liked.”

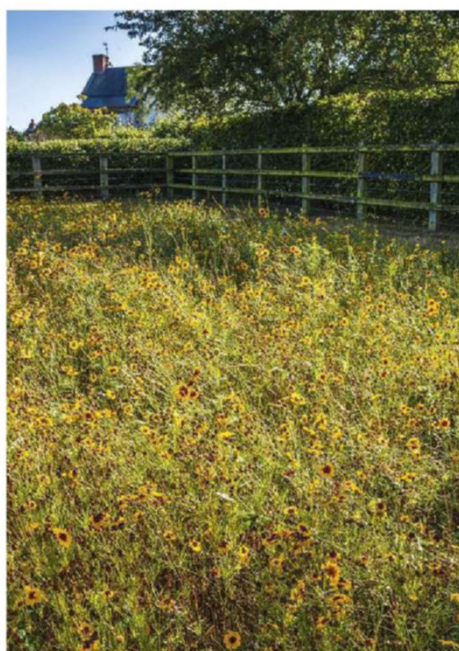
She found that she was drawn to gardens that evoke a strong response. “I want visitors to walk around a corner and say ‘Woah!’” And in the next garden room they surely do. Called the Big Grass Bed, it comprises one vast grass border, this time even less like a traditional border and more like a formally contained prairie or meadow, containing a hundred or so plants each of *Stipa gigantea*, *Calamagrostis* and *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *deamii*, among others. “There is a little, winding path through the planting and visitors walk through the tall grasses, way over their heads by autumn. I love playing with scale, making grown people feel like children again.”

Beyond the strong formal structure of the garden rooms are two wild meadows – one perennial; one annual. Both have extremely fertile soil – which is great for growing lush pasture for dairy cows, but makes maintaining an annual meadow a bit of a struggle; it ►

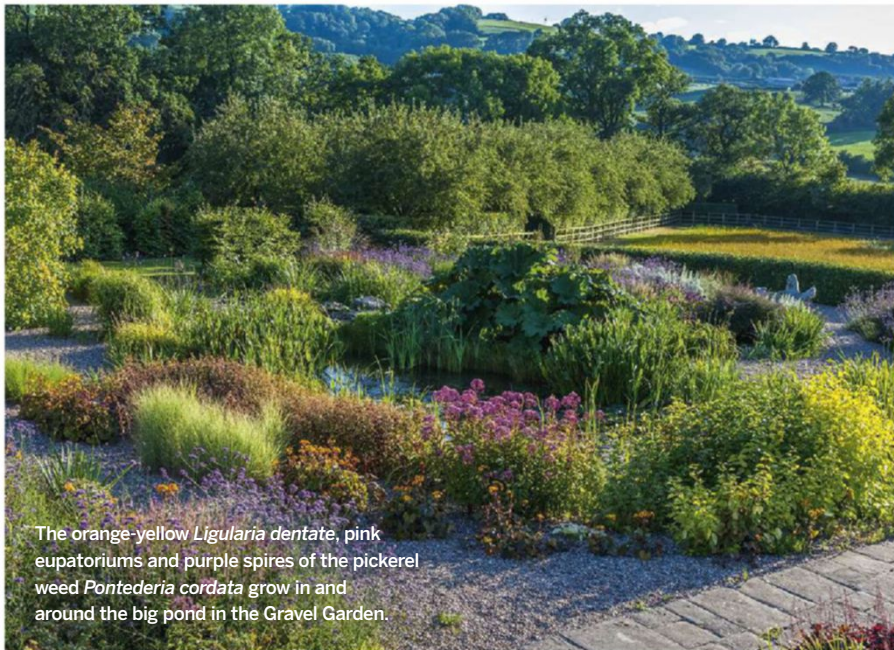
Recycling nutrients in an organic garden

This garden is sustained by a hard-working programme of composting and nutrient recycling essential to its organic status. Head gardener James Cox – who came here from Highgrove, another organically run garden – produces 30-40 cubic metres of compost every year, in five massive bays. He also makes comfrey tea by compressing comfrey in a bin (“don’t ever add water; it makes a very smelly mixture”) and siphoning off the liquid after a few weeks. Nettles are steeped in water for a few weeks to make nettle tea, and green manures are used in the vegetable garden. “We make all our own compost and potting mixes, and all our garden waste is recycled back into the garden. It is all part of creating a closed system.”

To be Soil Association certified the gardeners must keep lots of records and the garden is subject to inspections every year. “We think it’s worth it. The farm is certified organic, so it made sense for the garden to be too.” James doesn’t like to evangelise though, and prefers instead to let the garden do the talking. “We just show visitors that an organic garden doesn’t have to look scruffy – it can be very beautiful.”



9 of Sarah's favourite plants



The orange-yellow *Ligularia dentate*, pink eupatoriums and purple spires of the pickerel weed *Pontederia cordata* grow in and around the big pond in the Gravel Garden.

▷ is going to be replaced with a maze. Below the meadows is a mass planting of 150 ghostly silver birch, underplanted with ferns, followed by the Gravel Garden, all purples and blues with a sprinkling of yellow. “We used gravel as we wanted this part of the garden to be less formal than the rest,” says Sarah. The plants are encouraged to wander and self-seed, so that the bed shapes and pathways change in a way they cannot elsewhere.

Opening the garden up to visitors has made Sarah think about the journey around it. Its final act is the ha-ha. Here there is a view across Blagdon Lake and a large expanse of lawn, flanked by strips of field maples, *Rhus typhina* and grasses. “I wanted this area

framed, rather than gardened,” she says. In autumn the trees and grasses light up with colour, while across the lawn the top halves of the farm’s cows can be seen traipsing along the bottom of the ha-ha four times a day “like a shooting gallery”. It is a fun and wonderfully theatrical finale to a very personal garden. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Yeo Valley Organic Garden, Holt Farm, Blagdon, Somerset BS40 7SQ.

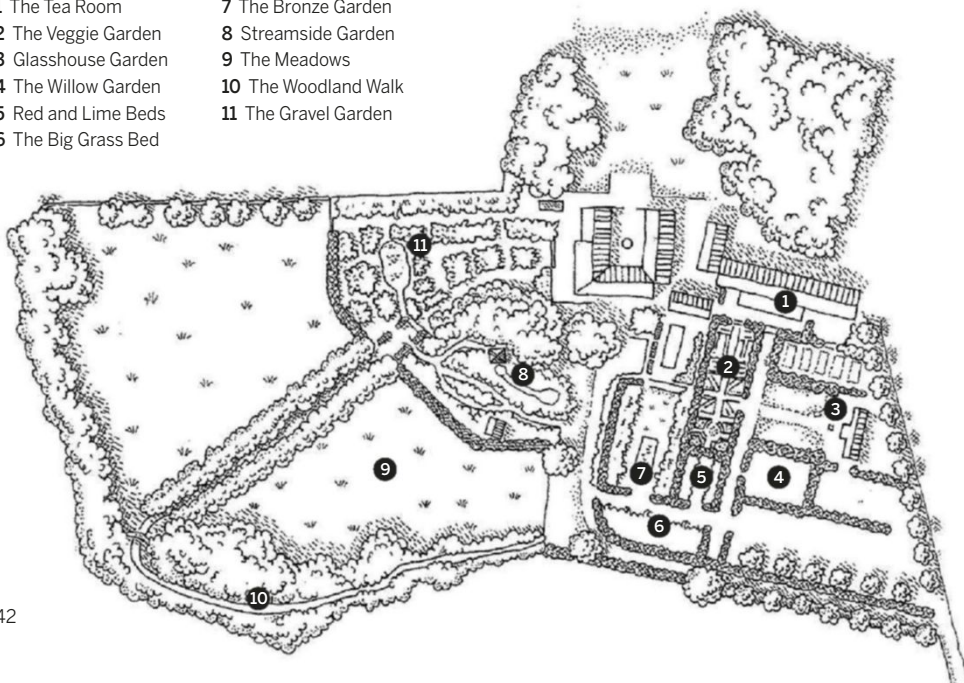
Tel 01761 461650.

Website theorganicgardens.co.uk

Open Thursdays and Fridays, 11am-5pm until 25 September 2015. Admission £5.

GARDEN PLAN

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1 The Tea Room | 7 The Bronze Garden |
| 2 The Veggie Garden | 8 Streamside Garden |
| 3 Glasshouse Garden | 9 The Meadows |
| 4 The Willow Garden | 10 The Woodland Walk |
| 5 Red and Lime Beds | 11 The Gravel Garden |
| 6 The Big Grass Bed | |



1 *Stipa tenuissima*

A great foil for other plants. Provides a froth of stems that move with the wind, and seeds itself about. 60cm. USDA 7a-10b†.

2 *Crocasmia x crocosmiiflora* ‘Honey Angels’

A slowly spreading plant that flowers in autumn. It’s fairly compact, which makes it better able to hold itself together than other crocosmias, which can sometimes flop apart. 75cm. USDA 5a-9b.

3 *Sedum* ‘Matrona’

The foliage is flushed dark purple and looks good against the other plants. We give it the Chelsea chop to keep it robust and for later flowers. 60cm. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 3b-9b.

4 *Veronicastrum virginicum* ‘Fascination’

This plant stands up to everything, even huge storms. 1.5m.

5 *Anemanthele lessoniana*

Known as pheasant grass, this has fantastic burnished coppery foliage and spreads easily. 1m. AGM. RHS H4.

6 *Verbena bonariensis*

Provides height without blocking. You can put it at the front of a border but see right through it. It’s also a bee magnet and seeds itself around the garden. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H4.

7 *Eupatorium maculatum* Atropurpureum Group

Known as Joe Pye weed, it stands very tall and has robust stems. 1.5m.

8 *Nepeta nervosa*

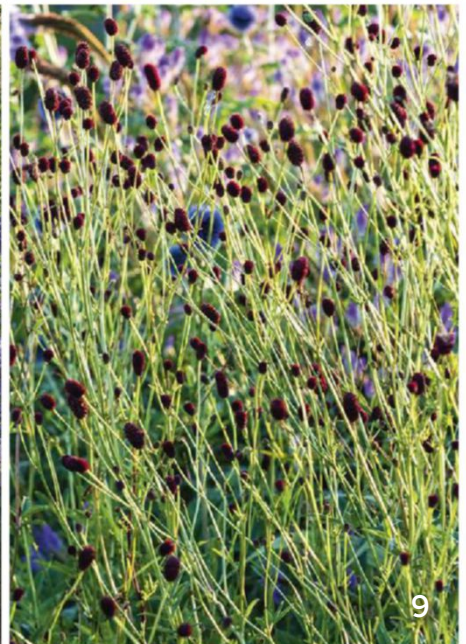
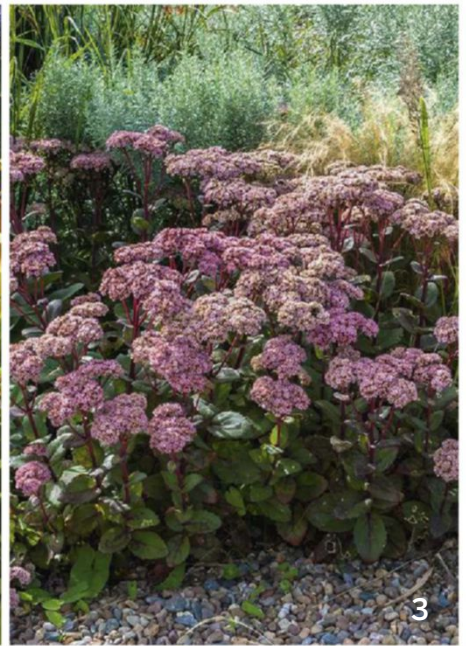
Slightly less rangy than some catmints, and the flowers are relatively stubby so you get a more concentrated colour. 50cm.

9 *Sanguisorba officinalis*

Another plant that is tall but transparent and self-seeds. 1.5m. USDA 4a-8b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.

†Hardiness ratings given where available.





Summer is a coming in

Long before harvest festival became an annual fixture, Michaelmas Day, or the Feast of St Michael, was when people feasted on the fruits of their labours. Kristy Ramage thinks it's a celebration worth reviving

WORDS AND STYLING KRISTY RAMAGE PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW MONTGOMERY





Creating traditions

To make our feast authentic we researched some of the many traditions associated with Michaelmas Day – and also invented a few new ones of our own. Clockwise from left:

Harvest exchange

Michaelmas comes hard on the heels of harvest festival so it's natural we strayed into some harvest customs, surrounded as we are by a garden full of produce and farmers working at full-tilt in nearby fields. Harvest festival, traditionally celebrated on the Sunday closest to the harvest moon, has been a fixture of the church calendar since Rev Robert Stephen Hawker, a Cornish clergyman, came up with the idea in 1843. Over time it gradually supplanted Michaelmas as the main harvest celebration. For our feast everyone brought produce that they had in plenty, and took away anything they were short of – a sort of harvest swap shop.

Galleon in the trees

I love the tale about Elizabeth I dining on goose when news was brought to her of the destruction of the Spanish Armada. She is reputed to have resolved to eat goose on Michaelmas Day and decreed that goose should be always eaten at that festival. In reality goose had been eaten at Michaelmas long before 1588, but the image was so alluring we decided to dress a model galleon in her honour with dahlias, Michaelmas daisies and hawthorn leaves and hang it from a richly berried branch of our hawthorn tree.

Blackberries

It is the Devil himself who is responsible for making it unlucky to pick blackberries after Michaelmas Day. According to folklore, when he was banished from heaven and fell from the sky, he landed on a blackberry bush. Imagining the state anyone would be in after landing on a blackberry bush, I think it's natural enough that he cursed the fruit and renews the curse each year.

Elizabethan crown

As another nod to Queen Bess, we covered 'an Elizabethan crown' in moss and *Clematis vitalba* (old man's beard), and 'bejewelled' it with *Chrysanthemum* 'Paul Bossier', *Tagetes* 'Cinnabar', *Symphoricarpos albus* (snowberries) and sloes. Then hung it from the pear arch in the kitchen garden. It was the finishing post for our 'horse' race (see below), and the winner was given the honour of carrying it in the procession to the feast.

Horse racing

We turned an old Scottish custom of horse racing on Michaelmas Day into a game for the children. They made horse masks by covering cardboard bases, cut to shape, with leaves and berries and straw attached with a glue gun. Adjustable elastic made them fit for racing in – no matter what size the child's head. The children raced around a circuit from the orchard, around the house to the kitchen garden. Rather pleased with their slightly disturbing appearance, they played a memorable game of hide and seek long after the feast had finished, ending only once dusk fell.

Michaelmas Day, on 29 September, marks the fourth quarter of the year, a bountiful time in the vegetable garden, pertinent for feasting. At one time, it was the day on which rents were settled and mayors elected, and for centuries, it was for almost everyone in the country a feast day – and central to that feast was a goose.

For our feast I was pragmatic, even romantic, rather than academic about the traditions. I focused on customs that captured the imagination, with elements of strangeness that fascinated me, and as it comes close on the heels of our harvest festival, we made a 'Straw Jack'. Covered with over 240 hand-tied bundles of barley, fixed with wire in layers to a chicken-wire frame, it stood more than two metres tall. The effort paid off; we had a strange giant for our procession, to carry the luck of the harvest from one year to the next. It wasn't only the children who were thrilled and slightly nervous at seeing him (with my husband inside) move disconcertingly through the garden.

We invited guests for 11am and served warm Michaelmas bannocks (see recipe overleaf) with coffee and pear juice. Traditionally, this was served with honey, but we ate it with blackberry jam, because according to folklore Michaelmas is the last day of the year on which you can pick blackberries and keep your luck. Feasts and festivals are all about working together, and fortified by bannock, we trimmed hats with blackberries, made horse masks, flower garlands and, of course, the 'Straw Jack' – while the goose was safely cooking away in the house. Celebrations bring people and places alive, creating new memories and marking the point in the year. For a brief moment the clock is slowed.

Turn over for Michaelmas feast recipes ►





Michaelmas bannock

A large, scone-like cake traditionally made by the eldest daughter of the household, who was under considerable pressure to get it right. If it broke before baking, it was bad luck for her; if it broke after baking it was bad luck for the whole family.

INGREDIENTS

Serves 16

150g (1⅓ cups) barley flour	2tsp baking soda
120g (1⅓ cups) rolled oats	600-720ml (2½-3 cups) buttermilk
136g (1⅓ cups) rye flour	3tbsp honey or brown sugar
130g plain flour	2 eggs
½tsp salt	240ml (1cup) single cream
4tbsp melted butter	

METHOD

- Mix the barley flour, rolled oats, rye flour, plain flour and salt together in a bowl. In a separate jug, mix together the soda and 600ml of buttermilk.
- Stir the honey, or brown sugar, into the buttermilk and add to the flour mixture. Mix well and turn out on to a floured board, adding more buttermilk if too dry or more flour if too sticky.
- Divide the dough in half, roll each on the floured board, forming a 20cm circle about 1-2cm thick.
- Heat a lightly greased skillet. In a bowl mix together the beaten eggs, cream and melted butter. Brush a little of the mixture on to one side of one of your bannock circles and place it egg-side down in the skillet until browned.
- Spread more of the egg mixture on to the top side of the bannock, flip it and cook until golden. Repeat the egg wash and flip until each side of the first bannock has been coated and cooked three times. Then repeat again with the second bannock.

Taken from *A Continual Feast: A Cookbook to Celebrate the Joys of Family and Faith Throughout the Christian Year* by Evelyn Birge Vitz (Ignatius Press, 1985).



Michaelmas goose with sage and apple

We served our goose with garden produce – courgettes with lemon and dill; pumpkin pangrattato with rosemary and orange, with added manchego cheese, to make a main for the vegetarians, and roast potatoes – followed by pear tart.

INGREDIENTS

Serves 8

- 1 goose (5-6kg dressed weight)
- 2 cooking apples, peeled cored and cut into rough chunks
- 2 onions, cut into rough chunks
- 2-3 sprigs fresh sage, plus extra leaves to dress
- Salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

- Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas 4.
- Wipe over bird, pull out the golden fat in the cavity and rub it over the breast (save the rest for the roast potatoes).
- Season the bird inside and out, stuff the cavity with apple and onion, and tuck sage sprigs into the neck.
- Place the bird breast down on a rack in a roasting tin and pour a mugful of hot water over the top, letting the water drip into the tray.
- Roast for 30 minutes, then turn the bird breast up, prick the skin, allowing the fat to run, then return to the oven for another 3½-4 hours total roasting time. Skim off the fat and baste the goose when it forms a thick layer. 10-15 mins before the end, sprinkle cold water over the bird to crisp the skin. Test that juices run clear with a skewer at the base of the thigh.
- Remove the the apple and onion from the cavity, and mash together with a few extra sage leaves to make a little sauce. Rest the goose for 20 minutes (ideally in a cooling oven) before carving.

Taken from *A Cook's Year in a Welsh Farmhouse* by Elisabeth Luard (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011).





Hard-working plants

We all want our gardens to provide interest for as long as possible, but some plants are more obliging than others. Nurserywoman Derry Watkins selects the plants that are willing to go that extra mile

WORDS DERRY WATKINS



***Verbena officinalis* var.
grandiflora 'Bampton'**
A mist of fine, dark purple
leaves sprinkled with tiny pink
flowers on narrow dark stems.
Glistens in the sun, and works
best against a pale background
to show it off. 80cm.



Derry Watkins
is the owner of
Special Plants
nursery near Bath.

We think we work hard in our gardens, but the plants do most of the work. And we are all looking for the hardest working plants of all: those that provide the most pleasure for the least amount of input. These are the plants that form the backbone of our gardens.

For me the single most important thing is beauty. I'm not interested in the boring but useful category; I want long-blooming plants that either sow themselves, or are naturally long lived. I want plants with beautiful foliage and structure, and I want plants that offer something at different times of the year.

The mainstay of my garden are the self-sowing plants. It seems ridiculous that such ephemeral plants can do such a big job. But there are many of them, all self sowing in profusion, repeating themselves throughout the garden, tying everything else together. Self sowers give a sense of abundance. Gardeners are stingy, but plants are generous.

Self-sown plants like to surprise you, putting themselves where you never would have thought of placing them, and usually growing better than the ones you carefully nurtured and planted out. Your job is to edit them and keep them in check, so choose plants that are easy to pull up. And you must be willing to be ruthless, thinning them in spring, tearing up any that come out the wrong colour or are smothering other plants.

Starting in early spring, my garden is awash first with lunarias, then, corydalis, digitalis, poppies... Great drifts of colour come and go almost unaided by me. The minute they look scruffy, out they come, and usually another plant is waiting to fill that gap.

I'm an unsophisticated gardener, utterly in love with flowers, so the longer blooming the better. Most self sowers bloom only for a month or two. For the long haul I rely on hardy shrubby salvias. If cut back hard in spring, they will give me five or six months of glorious colour. Penstemons and perennial wallflowers are also wonderfully long ▶

*Holds an Award
of Garden Merit
from the Royal
Horticultural Society.

†Hardiness ratings
given where available.

JASON INGRAM

▷ blooming. Dahlias like so many tender plants, don't realise winter is coming so just go on and on flowering until cut down by frost. All love sun. Shade plants are inclined to bloom more briefly, usually only in spring, so in a woodland garden foliage has to do most of the hard work.

Foliage provides a garden's basic building blocks. Box and yew are the two hardest working plants in mine, doing their quiet, unassuming job 365 days a year. They underpin all my gaudy displays with a sense of serious intent. But they're almost hard landscaping; never changing. For me fabulous foliage changes with the seasons.

Epimediums are supremely useful evergreen ground cover for shade with lovely flowers in spring. But there are now some new hybrids you might want to grow for their leaves alone with beautifully cut, long leaves often deeply coloured in spring. Glamorous evergreens are rare.

Astelias seem glamorous to me, almost too glamorous. Most are too tender to leave outside over the winter, but some of the newer, red-flushed ones seem hardier and more sun tolerant. Ferns of all descriptions love my garden, self sowing in endless variety: fine and lacy; broad and glossy, tiny or huge. Almost all have beautiful leaves.

I often find variegated plants hard to use. To my eye subtle grey-green and white variegations sit more comfortably with other plants than bright green and white. I like leaves that give a misty effect; that whisper rather than shout. One of my favourite foliage effects is the transparent screen – a line of tall, thin foliage, half hiding the view behind. Grasses are good for this, as are thalictrums with their airy delicate foliage. Tall plants have an important role to play even in small gardens. Big leaves lend drama and a sense of purposefulness; small leaves allow you to colonise the air above the garden without shading out the plants below.

Ideally, a hard-working plant should work at all times of the year but not bore you. We want evergreen leaves, or bark or good bone structure in winter; interesting new growth or flowers in spring; good foliage or flowers or drama in summer; berries or seedheads or coloured leaves in autumn. Few plants can manage all of the above, but some of the best will shine in two or three different seasons.

• Derry's recommendations for hard-working plants continue over the next six pages.

Self sowers



Tragopogon crocifolius

A plant that's closely related to salsify. Has pretty lavender, star-like flowers that turn into dandelion clocks. Gives lots of verticals early in the year when everything else is low. Pull up when they fall over in July. 1m. USDA 5a-9b†.



***Geranium pyrenaicum* 'Bill Wallis'**

Little vivid violet flowers on fine foliage scrambling through other plants in spring. Pull out when they start to look messy in June. A few more will appear in August. 45cm. USDA 3a-9b.



Viola corsica

A wonderful viola. A hardy perennial that is in bloom from April to October, creating a sea of purple – and it self sows. It originates from the mountains of Corsica, so unlike other violas, needs sun and drainage. 20cm. USDA 5a-9b.



Erigeron annuus

Tall stalks carrying masses of tiny white daisies create a positive cloud of white that sways above everything else in the middle of my garden. Scrawny when young, they get better and better as summer goes on. 2m.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DERRY WATKINS; JASON INGRAM X3



***Digitalis purpurea* 'Pam's Choice'**

A huge foxglove, that grows so tall I often find I cannot reach the top flowers. The flowers are beautiful – white and heavily spotted with purple in the throat. Self-sows true if there are no other *D. purpurea* nearby. 2.5m.



***Papaver rupifragum* 'Flore Pleno'**

Semi-double, soft-orange flowers above slightly furry, blue-grey leaves. Pops up everywhere, although prefers sun and drainage. Good at invigorating a too-tasteful colour scheme in spring. 45cm. USDA 5a-8b.



***Papaver somniferum* 'Lauren's Grape'**

A glorious opium poppy – the deepest, saturated velvety purple. Its pale blue-grey foliage sets off its big ephemeral flowers to perfection. It appears suddenly in April; flowers appear in June, then it is gone. 1m.



Primula florindae

Also known as the giant Himalayan cowslip, its extremely fragrant, pale-yellow nodding flowers appear in July. Best in damp soil and full sun, but is happy in damp shade. Lovely seedheads. 1m. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.



***Lunaria annua* 'Corfu Blue'**

This blue-purple honesty will flower a year after you sow it. Often lives two or three years. Blooms a month earlier than other lunarias: late March instead of late April. Has purple-flushed seedpods. 90cm. RHS H7.



Eryngium giganteum

Better known as Miss Wilmott's ghost, this has big silver ruffs in July on rather short plants. Handsome all summer. Can become deep rooted once established, so look out for seedlings. 80cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.

Fabulous foliage



Polystichum setiferum 'Pulcherrimum Bevis'

The most beautiful of ferns, with long, intricate and slightly shiny leaves that are twisted at tip. More or less evergreen. Cut out oldest fronds in spring. Likes shade and good soil. 1m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.



Euphorbia characias Silver Swan (= 'Wilcott')

Grey-green and white variegated leaves echoed in grey-green and white flower heads. Makes fat mound of softly rounded leaves. Like all *E. characias* it needs to be replaced every few years. 3m. RHS H6.



Thalictrum 'Elin'

The new leaves are blue-grey gorgeously flushed with purple. By May the stems have soared to a height of 2m. In June lavender buds open to creamy flowers. Stems stand all winter. 3m. USDA 3a-7b.



Epimedium 'Spine Tangler'

Amazing new hybrid with young leaves that are red and look wet as though newly hatched. These gradually turn green with crisp points. Yellow flowers in spring. Needs shade and good soil for best results. 30cm.



Sedum telephium (Atropurpureum Group) 'Purple Emperor'

Its shining leaves keep getting darker. Pinkish flowers are followed by dark-red seedheads, which stay as skeletons until new leaves emerge. 45cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-10b.



Miscanthus sinensis 'Morning Light'

The subtle grey-green and white stripe on its narrow leaves makes this one of the most accommodating grasses in the garden. Never showy, always complementing its neighbours. 2m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JASON INGRAM; MARTIN HUGHES-JONES / ALAMY; GARY K SMITH / ALAMY; COEN JANSEN



Dahlia 'Twynning's After Eight'

A striking dahlia with black foliage and creamy white single flowers – a perfect combination. Loves sun and good soil, but is one of the toughest dahlias I have. It regularly overwinters in my garden. AGM. RHS H3.



Amicia zygomeris

A crazy plant. It dies to the ground in winter, and then rises up to 2m by July. Where the leaves join the stem you'll find a pair of soft, purple-veined leafy outgrowths or stipules. Leaves fold down at night. 2m. USDA 7b-9b.



Heptacodium miconioides

A beautiful tree with peeling bark, and leaves that curl down in pairs to touch. Fragrant white flowers appear in September. When these fall in autumn, pink calyxes remain and last until November. 6m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.



Astelia nervosa 'Westland'

The long, silver leaves of most astelias are useful for giving a garden a touch of drama. These new, red-flushed cultivars seem to be hardier and more sun tolerant than their larger silver cousins. 80cm. USDA 9a-11.

Further choices

SELF SOWERS

Any cultivar of these species will probably do the job, but below I've listed ones I particularly like:

Atriplex hortensis var. rubra

Hardy annual. 1.2m. USDA 2a-11.

Cerinth major 'Purpurascens'

Hardy annual. 60cm.

Corydalis ochroleuca

Perennial. 45cm. USDA 5a-8b.

Eschscholzia californica 'Alba'

Hardy annual. 30cm. USDA 6a-10b.

Hesperis matronalis var. albiflora

Perennial. 90cm.

Iberis gibraltarica 'Betty Swainson'

Perennial. 30cm. AGM. RHS H4.

Knautia macedonica

Perennial. 80cm. USDA 5a-10b.

Linaria purpurea 'Canon Went'

75cm. USDA 5a-8b.

Papaver rhoeas Mother of Pearl Group

Annual. 45cm.

Verbena bonariensis

Perennial. 1.2m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.

Viola cornuta Alba Group

Perennial. 15cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-11.

FABULOUS FOLIAGE

Chionochloa rubra

Grass. 1.2m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 8a.

Cotinus 'Grace'

Shrub or small tree. 4.7m. USDA 5a-8b.

Gomphostigma virgatum

Marginal shrub. 1m. USDA 7a-11.

Helleborus x ericsmithii

Perennial. 15cm. USDA 6a-6b.

Impatiens omeiana

Perennial. 45cm. USDA 6a-11.

Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens'

Grass. 30cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-10b.

Physocarpus opulifolius

Lady in Red (= 'Tuilad')

Shrub. 1.8m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 2b-8b.

Ricinus 'New Zealand Purple'

Shrub. 2m. USDA 8a-11.

Sambucus nigra f.

porphyrophylla 'Eva'

Tree. 3m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-7b.

Tetrapanax papyrifer 'Rex'

Shrub. 4.7m. USDA 6a-10b.

LONG BLOOMING

***Argyranthemum* 'Levada Cream'**

Perennial. 70cm. AGM. RHS H2.

Clematis* x *durandii

Perennial. 1.8m. AGM. RHS H6,
USDA 4a-9b.

Daphne tangutica

Shrub. 1m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

Erigeron karvinskianus

Perennial. 30cm. AGM. RHS H4,
USDA 6a-9b.

Euphorbia ceratocarpa

Perennial. 1.2m. USDA 8a-9b.

Euphorbia seguieriana

subsp. *niciciana*

Perennial. 60cm. USDA 6b-11.

***Geranium* 'Anne Thomson'**

Perennial. 45cm. AGM. RHS H7,
USDA 4a-8b.

***Geranium* Patricia (= 'Brempat')**

Perennial. 60cm. AGM. RHS H7,
USDA 3a-7b.

Persicaria* x *fennica

Perennial. 2m. USDA 5a-9b.

***Salvia* 'Amistad'**

Perennial. 1.2m. USDA 8a-11.

***Salvia microphylla* 'Cerro Potosi'**

Perennial. 90cm. USDA 7a.

***Thalictrum* 'Splendide'**

Perennial. 2.4m. USDA 4a-7b.

Where to buy

• **Beth Chatto Gardens**

Elmstead Market, Colchester,
Essex CO7 7DB.

Tel 01206 822007, bethchatto.co.uk

• **Cotswold Garden Flowers**

Sands Lane, Badsey, Evesham,
Worcestershire WR11 7EZ.

Tel 01386 422829, cgf.net

• **Edrom Nurseries**

Coldingham, Eyemouth,
Berwickshire TD14 5TZ.

Tel 01890 771386,

edrom-nurseries.co.uk

• **Marchants Hardy Plants**

2 Marchants Cottages, Mill Lane,
Laughton, East Sussex N8 6AJ.

Tel 01323 811737,

marchantshardyplants.co.uk

• **Special Plants Nursery**

Greenways Lane, Cold Ashton,
Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 8LA.

Tel 01225 891686, specialplants.net

Long blooming



***Astrantia* 'Buckland'**

An astrantia that blooms in June and then reblooms profusely if cut hard back after its first flowering. It's a sterile hybrid so won't seed around the garden. Grows equally well in sun or shade as long as it's not too dry. 80cm.



***Erysimum* 'Parish's'**

Provides months of multi-coloured, rich-red and purple flowers on long arching stems. Sweetly scented with neat, green foliage. When it becomes straggly, cut it back and it should last several years. 50cm.



***Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Blackfield'**

In July slender, dark scarlet, spikes emerge from black-tipped buds to stand tall above a mound of fresh green leaves, providing a beautiful show until October. Happy in full sun or part shade. 1.2m. USDA 5a-9b.



***Geranium* Rozanne (= 'Gerwat')**

The best of all geraniums, blooming from June until the first frosts, then dying back to base. Does not try to take over the garden. For me does better in light shade. 60cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ANDREA JONES IMAGES / ALAMY; TORIE CHUGG; THOMAS ALAMY / GAP PHOTOS; JASON INGRAM



***Penstemon* 'Alice Hindley'**

A semi-evergreen perennial that produces large, purple and white, bell-shaped flowers on tall racemes, providing colour all summer. Long-lived if cut back very hard in spring. 90cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.



Romneya coulteri

Also known as the California tree poppy, this has enormous, white tissue paper flowers on blue-grey foliage. Try not to disturb roots when planting. Invasive, but beautiful. 2m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-11.



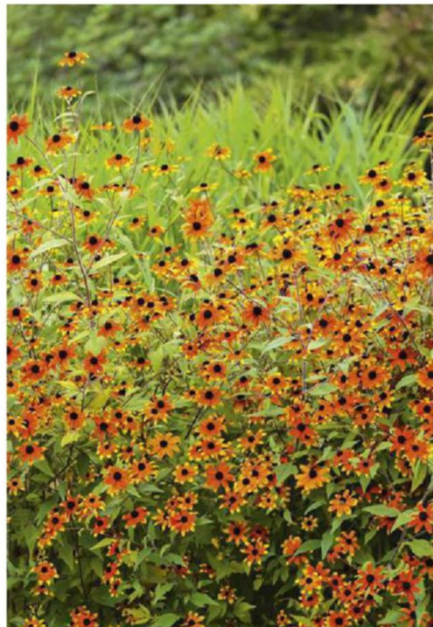
***Salvia x jamensis* 'Nachtvlinder'**

Produces small flowers of the deepest purple from June until the first frosts. Also has fine fragrant leaves. Looks outstanding if placed against a pale background. Prune hard in spring. 40cm.



***Mathiasella bupleuroides* 'Green Dream'**

An exotic-looking plant with mid-green leaves on purple-flushed stems. The large apple-green bracts appear in April and age over time to a rose colour. A relatively hardy plant, it is happiest in light shade. 1m.



***Rudbeckia triloba* 'Prairie Glow'**

A plant that shimmers with small daisies in shades of red and rusty orange with delicate yellow tips. They flower in late summer and continue for several months. An airy plant, it is short-lived, but self seeds. 90cm.



***Salvia greggii* 'Stormy Pink'**

Smothered in creamy pink flowers from June until frosts appear. It looks as though it is dead all winter, and for best results you'll need to cut it back hard when you see new growth in spring. 1.2m.

Lutfun Hussain

The Coriander Club's modest founder on how her gardening and cookery club offers east London's Bengali community more than a supply of familiar vegetables

WORDS JOJO TULLOH PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Lutfun Hussain is bent over picking rocket when I arrive at the Spitalfields City Farm, an enjoyable muddle of sheds, animal enclosures, raised beds and polytunnels. It is late November but there are marigolds blooming in polytunnels, whose beds are closely planted with vivid-green chard and mustard plants. From the ceiling hang huge dried, bottle gourds, evidence of last year's bounty. Visit in high summer (or during the Festival of Heat, east London's annual chilli festival, in September) and you'll find yourself lost among shield-sized gourd leaves, giant speckled gourds, vast pumpkins and searingly hot chillies. At the centre of this fertile bounty is the modest, smiling figure of community gardener Lutfun Hussain. Today she is wearing a warm cardigan over a black sari printed with bright-red hibiscus flowers. She seems perfectly at ease among her plants.

Although originally from Bangladesh, Lutfun has lived in London since the late 1960s. Fifteen years ago she started a women's gardening group, the Coriander Club, at the farm, providing Bengali women with an activity outside the home. As well as re-establishing a link to the rural life many have left behind, they also produce masses of the fresh vegetables most often used in Bengali cookery.

"My childhood was in Bangladesh, near Dakhar," says Lutfun. "I didn't do any gardening but I was surrounded by people cultivating. I came to England in 1969 to be married and moved into a house in Tower Hamlets with a long garden. I couldn't find the fresh vegetables I knew from home, so when I ate a pumpkin I kept the seed; if I went shopping in a Bangla grocers I would buy ripe chillies and keep the seed. When I went back to Bangladesh, I put seeds in my handbag."

Although there is a long tradition of female gardener cooks in Bangladesh, Lutfun's first attempts at gardening were far from successful. "The weather is so different here. When I started gardening everything died. In Bangladesh you don't need to dig you just put the seed in the ground and things grow, and you can grow things all year round but here I didn't know when to put things outside. The first year I tried chillies but my plants died, the second year again they died, but I watched practical gardening shows, such as *Gardener's World* with Alan Titchmarsh, and I learned."

Gradually, Lutfun grew in confidence and skill and in 2000 a new opportunity opened up. "I saw an advertisement in the Bangla newspaper, they were looking for volunteers to come to the farm. I love gardening and I started growing things here. At the beginning it was just me and the farm manager."

Lutfun spread the word by visiting the local primary school where she spoke to the mums and handed out flyers printed in

Bangla and English. "Soon word spread that we were growing Bengali vegetables," she says.

Lutfun is now employed by the farm but it hasn't always been easy. In the beginning she had to learn how to run a group gardening project from scratch. "To start with I made mistakes," she admits. "Some people came early, some late; some took more vegetables home than others. There were arguments. Then we fixed a timetable from 10.30am-1pm twice a week, we put the vegetables in a basket and divided it by the number of people who came and it was fair."

One of the biggest problems was finding money to fund the club. "The farm manager told me there was no money for seeds or compost so I started selling *kodu* (bottle gourd) and tomato plants. We sold *lablab* (a flat bean) seed, gourd seeds and in this way we had money to carry on," she says.

Gardening obviously gives Lutfun a huge amount of personal pleasure but so does the effect the Coriander Club has for women in the Bengali community. "Many women are living in flats, they are scared to go out," she says. "Our Tuesday group is just women. On Thursday we run a mixed group and on Monday a cooking club. Everything I do is to help the club keep going. In 2007 I became a London Leader [an initiative that recognises influential community workers]. I had to write a speech. I do these things because it means we can get money to carry on the club."

Lutfun is proud of what the club has achieved, listing recent prizes won at local agricultural shows and the Tower Hamlets in Bloom awards, but it is the practical gardening that really makes her light up. It seems Lutfun can get almost anything to grow. As well as *kodu*, the Coriander Club grows *chichinga* (snake gourds), ribbed gourds and *mooli* (a long, white, radish-like vegetable) alongside mustards, *naga* chillies (the world's hottest type, allegedly), aubergines, amaranth, garlic and okra. Lutfun smiles all the time but underneath her relaxed air there is no mistaking her determination and commitment. In a gap between one polytunnel and the fence she proudly shows me a line of stacked tyres filled with earth and plants. "Look," she says, pointing. "I make use of everything." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Spitalfields City Farm, Buxton Street, London E1 5AR.

Tel 020 7247 8762, spitalfieldscityfarm.org

NEXT MONTH Landscape and garden designer Xa Tollemache.

As well as re-establishing a link to the rural life many have left behind, the Coriander Club produces masses of the fresh vegetables most often used in Bengali cookery



Fresh beginnings

An Arts and Crafts garden in Suffolk has been given a striking new lease of life by garden designer Sue Townsend

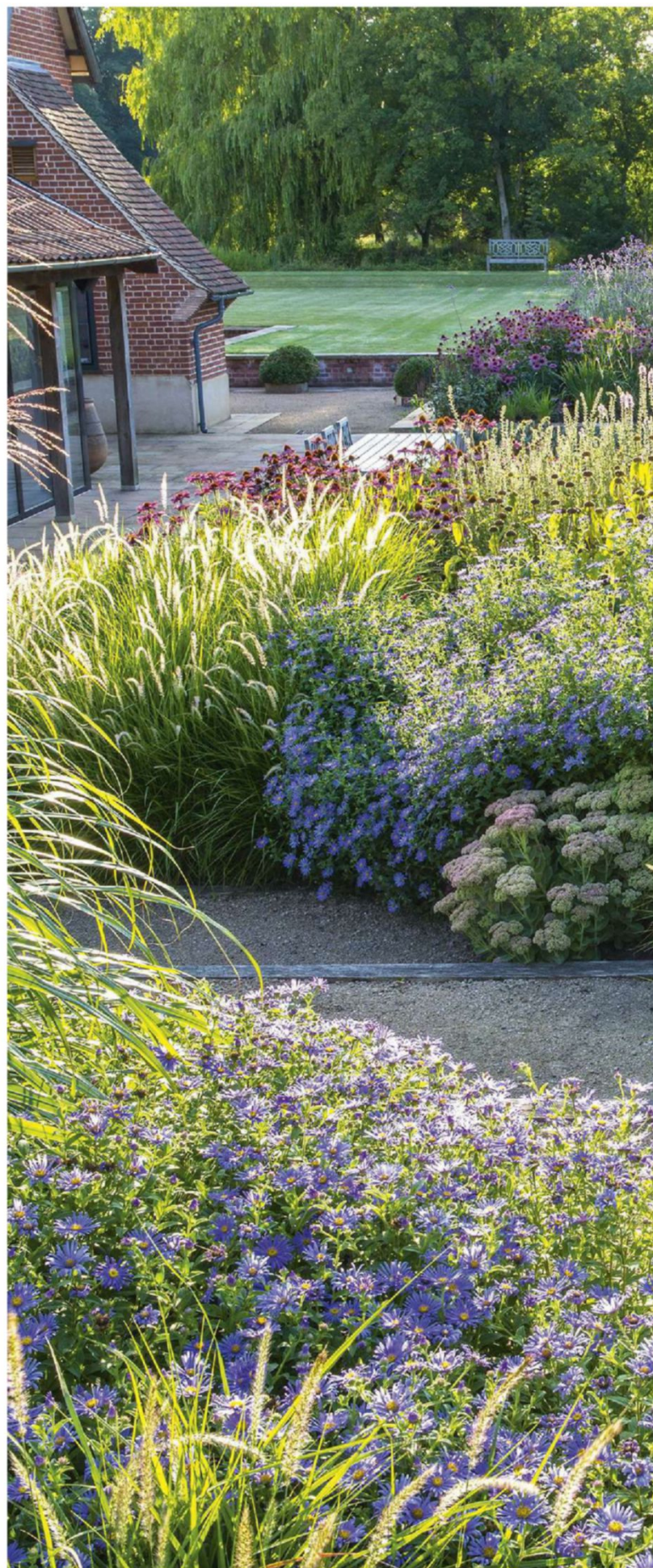
WORDS JAMES ALEXANDER-SINCLAIR
PHOTOGRAPHS MARIANNE MAJERUS

The train trundles past arable fields, occasional estuaries and through gentle valleys. All very lovely, but the reason for this little pootle down the East Suffolk line is to visit a garden with its roots in the Arts and Crafts movement of the early 20th century, but whose structure and planting has been yanked firmly into the 21st century through a close and careful collaboration between the owners and the designer Sue Townsend (who carried off two prizes at last year's Society of Garden Designers Awards, including one for the planting in this very garden).

Sue has been a full-time garden designer for the past 14 years, following a career as a political lobbyist. The love of plants came as a bit of a surprise to her family. "My parents laughed at the idea as I had paid absolutely no attention at all to plants while I was growing up," she says. She has embraced her new career with gusto, even to the extent of treading in the hallowed footsteps of Percy Thrower by becoming the *Blue Peter* gardener for a while.

She only started work here in 2008 but an awful lot has happened over the past seven years. Looking around there is not much left to tie in with the original architect's plans – the house remains relatively unchanged but around it everything is fairly recent apart from the moat. The idea of a moat may make you think of battlemented strongholds, but this one is not at all baronial and instead serves to neatly divide the garden.

Sue takes me on a sweeping walk through the gardens. Starting at the front of the house we walk under a well-proportioned oak pergola with *Wisteria floribunda* 'Yae-kokuryu' coiling up the timbers and the scent of *Rosa* 'Paul's Himalayan Musk' filling the air. It is surrounded by classic early summer planting – alchemilla, delphiniums and ▷



In brief

What A contemporary garden in the grounds of an Arts and Crafts manor house.

Where Suffolk.

Size Four and a half acres.

Climate Dry and windy.

Soil Heavy clay.

Hardiness rating USDA 9.



Oak sleeper and gravel steps lead down to the Arts and Crafts house through lush plantings of the blue daisy *Aster x frikartii* 'Jungfrau', the airy grass *Pennisetum* 'Fairy Tails' and rich pink *Sedum* 'Matrona'. Behind these the red spikes of *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Firetail' and blue globes of *Echinops ritro* 'Veitch's Blue' provide the backdrop to a dining terrace.



How to make a garden your own

When taking on a new garden there are a few things – apart from, perhaps, consulting a designer – worth considering

- Try and live with it for a year without making too many drastic changes – watch what grows and how the garden is affected by the weather and the seasons.
- Other people's taste is not always yours. Make sure that all the existing features of the garden work with the way you live your life.
- At the same time don't just clear everything without consideration. Trees in particular may be there as windbreaks or to block an eyesore.
- Do things slowly as this gives you the chance to change your mind. As the saying goes: fools rush in...

▷ nepeta. Everything here is beautifully kept. “The owners are very keen gardeners and are out here in all weathers,” says Sue. “It is always a pleasure to design for clients that take such an active interest in the garden.” Beyond the pergola we cross the moat via a fine wooden bridge in the Arts and Crafts tradition.

On the other side of the moat, the planting is much looser as a way to link the garden with the wider countryside. It was not always so – when Sue first arrived the garden was suffering from an excess of neatness. She explains: “It was all mown very short – now we have let the grass grow a bit longer and have laced it with mown paths leading in a wide arc around the garden.” En route we pass a small, newly planted pinetum: this is not something that you often find nowadays but the owners were very keen on the idea, and there is a lot to be said for the multitude of shapes available and the advantages of a bit of winter structure. “The idea came about because of the existing cedar,” remembers Sue. “I did loads of research to find trees that would do ▷

Clockwise from above

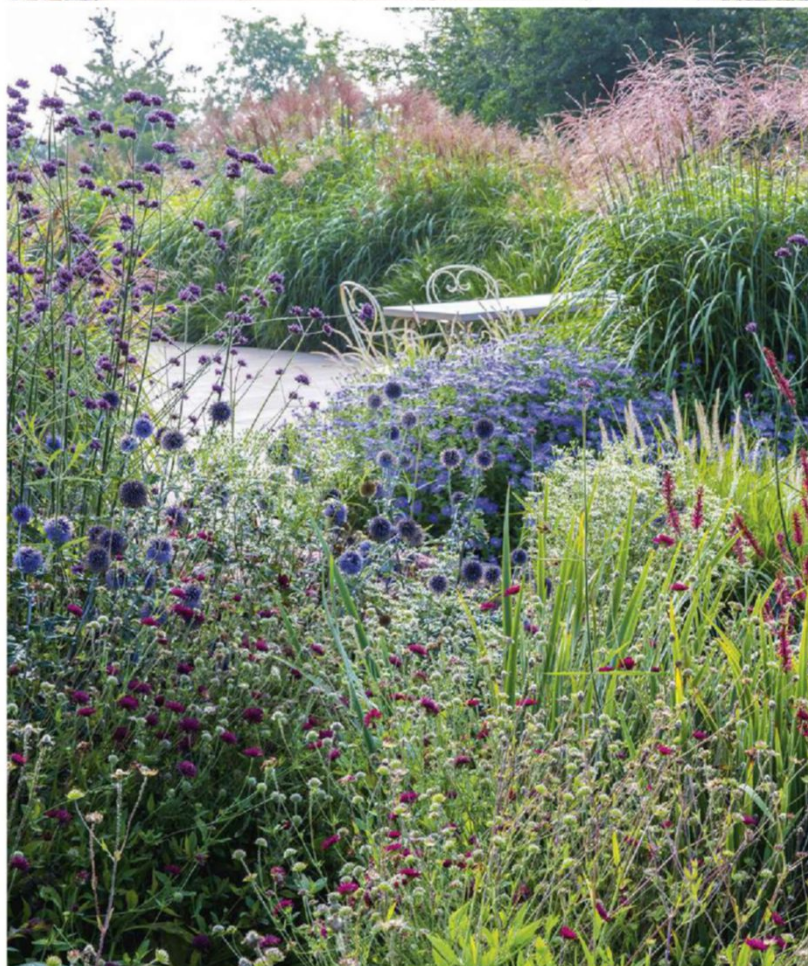
Curved brick steps leading down from the lawn to the dining terrace are part of an earlier design by local landscape architect Nicholas Newton.

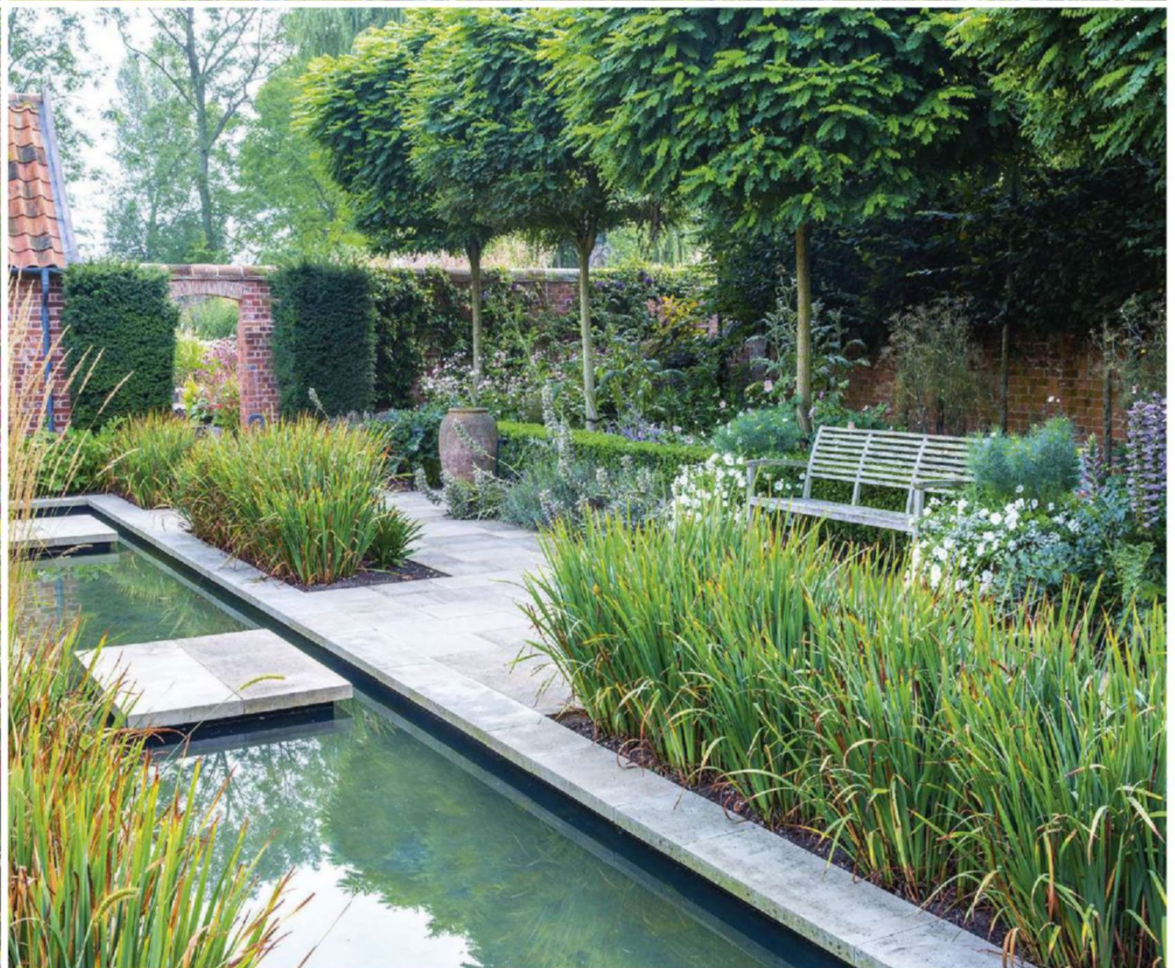
An olive tree and exuberant plantings of *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote' give this contemporary courtyard a calm Mediterranean feel.

In the hot border, colourful dahlias, the orange 'David Howard' and red 'Bishop of Llandaff', mix with the yellow of *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm' and orange and red bi-coloured flowers of *Hemerocallis* 'Aztec Firebird'.

A row of *Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Umbraculifera' provide a stylish end to the courtyard garden where a rill is lined by swathes of *Iris* 'Silver Edge'.

Statuesque pink plumes of *Miscanthus transmorrisonensis* help keep this terrace private. In front is an airy mix of flowers, including the blue bobbles of *Echinops ritro* 'Veitch's Blue' and red spikes of *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Firetail'.





Four combinations from the garden

Shady corner. In the shade of an acer the planting is a little calmer than elsewhere in the garden. The grass in the lower left is *Hakonechloa macra* 'Nicolas' (1) which nudges up to one of the very best autumn anemones, *A. x hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert' (2). The fern in the corner is the lovely shuttlecock, *Matteuccia struthiopteris* (3) and then the fluffy, plumed, chestnut-leaved *Rodgersia aesculifolia* (4).

To the edge. This classic perennial border for late summer provides a soft edge to the oak sleeper steps, with the blue-flowered *Aster x frikartii* 'Jungfrau' (1) sitting alongside a salmon-pink *Sedum* 'Herbstfreude' (2). It is the ideal place to put a grass so there is one: the soft and wavy *Pennisetum* 'Fairy Tails' (3). Across the path is the pink *Echinacea purpurea* 'Leuchstern' (4) and the red *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Firetail' (5).

Pinks and blues. Another tumble of late-summer perennials, where the airy grass *Pennisetum* 'Fairy Tails' (1) provides the perfect foil for the globes of *Echinops ritro* 'Veitch's Blue' (2) their blue made all the more vivid by the sultry, dark pink of *Sedum* 'Matrona' (3), and the gorgeously rich ruby red of *Echinacea purpurea* 'Ruby Giant' (4).

Hot border. In this hot border, which can be seen from the front door, a bright-red *Dahlia* 'Bishop of Llandaff' (1) and the ever-reliable *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm' (2) immediately draw the eye. Then the oranges kick in with *Dahlia* 'David Howard' (3) and a tall *Kniphofia* 'Nobilis' (4) alongside Jaffa cake-coloured heleniums (5).

▷ well on this soil." Now there are young specimens, including *Pinus nigra* subsp. *nigra* and *Sequoiadendron giganteum* 'Glaucum'. You get occasional glimpses of countryside, but Sue has planted a thick bank of native shrubs as a windbreak as the North Sea is not far away.

Popping back across the moat we arrive at a neat vegetable garden and from there into an orchard where the original trees (including quince and medlar) have been augmented with apples, pears and plums. Our final stop is the pool garden, designed to look its best in late summer. There are great froths of *Miscanthus transmorrisonensis* and *Pennisetum* 'Fairy Tails', which not only provide excitement but also privacy. We descend some beautifully designed oak sleeper and gravel steps surrounded by an avalanche of late-flowering perennials.

From there it is but a small step to the slick contemporary courtyard, which was Sue's original brief. There is an L-shaped rill, which echoes the shape of the moat, overlooked by a crisp stone terrace. The planting is dominated by a row of the parasol acacia *Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Umbraculifera' and six noble olives.

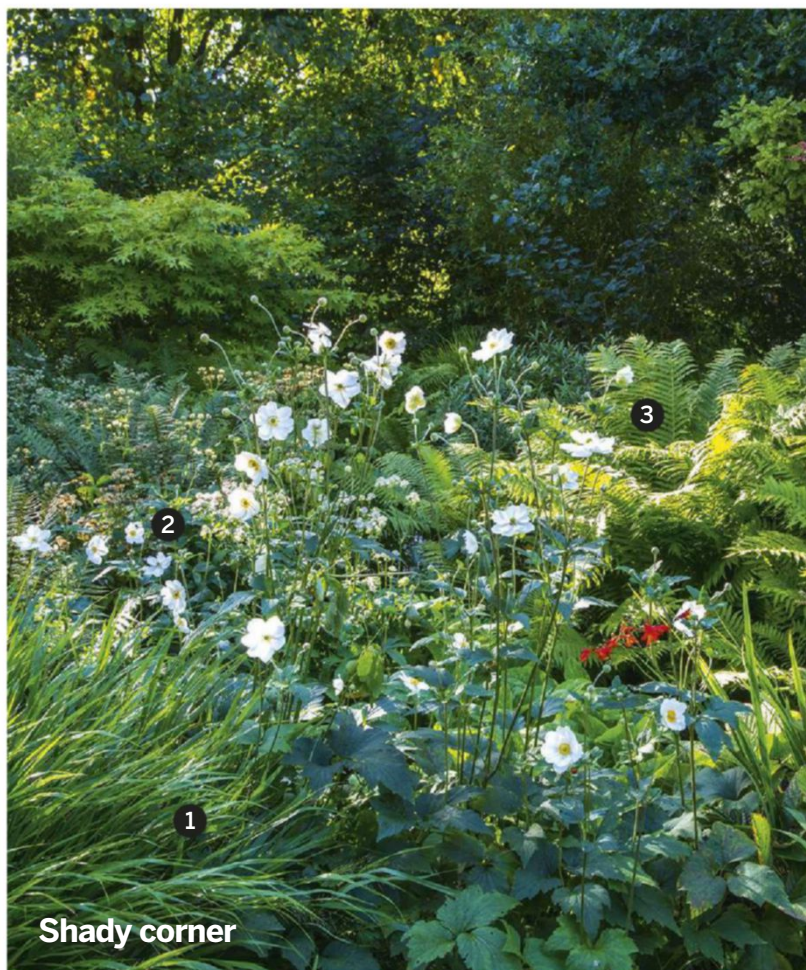
A moat, areas of wild grass, a pinetum, an orchard, vegetable garden, deep and capricious plantings, a courtyard, a rill, a hot border, and a spring garden. Squeezing all these elements into one garden without one crashing into another or diffusing the impact is what good designers do: Sue Townsend does not disappoint. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Sue Townsend Garden Design

Tel 01728 648790.

Website suetownsendgardendesign.co.uk







Tools of the trade

When Kristy Ramage felt her ramshackle collection of tools was in need of some loving care, she called on gardener Daniel Back to show her how to get it right

WORDS AND STYLING KRISTY RAMAGE PHOTOGRAPHS BRITT WILLOUGHBY DYER

Maintenance

My friend Daniel Back is a gardener and designer who knows that a well-tended garden requires well-kept tools. When he came to visit, he helped overhaul my tool shed and showed me how to get the best from my tools. Dan takes a craftsman's approach to gardens and it follows that he keeps his tools in meticulous order. In peak condition they are a pleasure to use; efficient and sharp and longer lasting.



A place for everything

We started by making my shed as efficient a space as possible. We added some extra pegs for hanging tools, no more than two deep in an orderly row. Alongside the existing row of old wooden pegs with 'hook ends', we added a strip of hard wood and drilled pairs of holes, slightly upturning the angle, at 70mm apart, to take 12mm diameter metal pegs (120mm long). These are ideal for hanging tools with a T or D handle. Long-handled tools, such as rakes and hoes, are now kept out of the way on racks, fitted in the eaves of the sloping ceiling; hand tools now hang on the wall opposite the door, so they're easy to spot, and everyone will be able to find the right tool for the job in hand.

We also filled a painted green box with a mix of sand and about 1.5 litres of used engine oil, obligingly supplied by my local garage. After removing the worst of the mud, you plunge any steel tool into the box and wriggle it around, before hanging it up, cleaned and protected in an instant.

Cleaning and oiling

Once he'd sorted out my storage, Dan explained how to clean and oil my tools properly. On a day-to-day basis, you need only scrape the soil off your tools and quickly wipe them over with an oily rag or plunge them into an oil and sand bucket, before hanging them up. But at least a couple of times a year, possibly more if it's particularly muddy, it's good to give everything a thorough clean.

Begin by scraping and washing off all mud. It's useful to have a wedge-shaped piece of hard wood (traditionally called a 'man') to scrape off most of the mud. For this purpose I have an old butter pat, sharpened to a chisel end, which works a treat. An old galvanised water tank, or even a dustbin or bucket positioned right by the shed is ideal for washing tools.

Scrub handles and tool ends with a stiff scrubbing brush, then place the tools in a warm place to make sure they are thoroughly dry. Any roughness on

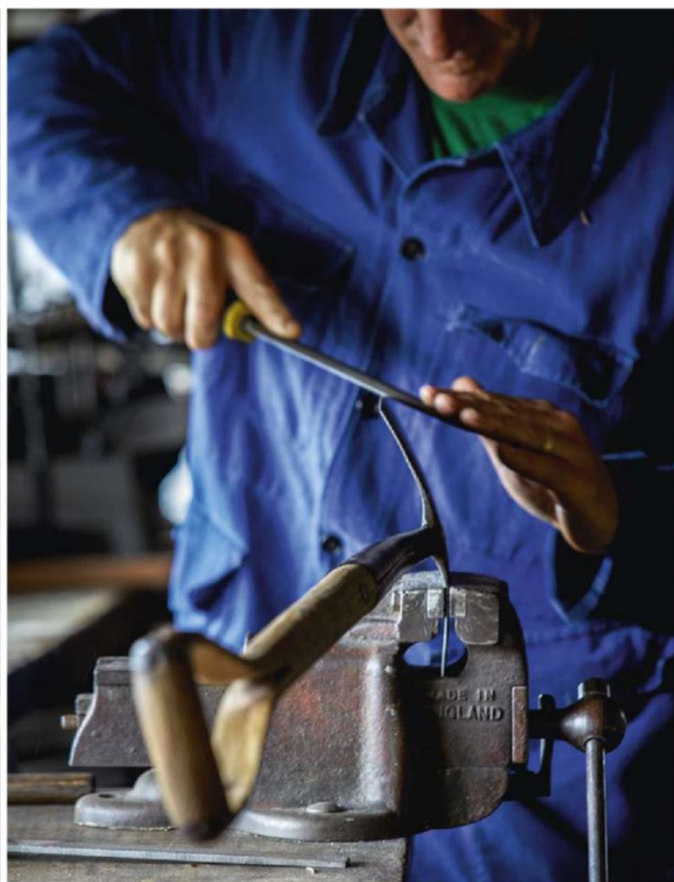
handles (washing can lift the grain of the wood) can be rubbed down with fine sandpaper, and any rust on the steel removed with medium-grade steel wool.

Apply linseed or tung oil to the wooden handles and metal heads, using a soft rag. You can use either raw or boiled linseed oil, but boiled often has driers added to it, and is lighter so it will dry more quickly. Similarly tung oil, which is obtained by pressing the seed from the nut of the tung tree (*Vernicia fordii*), is available in a quick drying form or raw, and hardens on exposure to air. Hand tools can even be soaked in oil overnight, to feed and preserve the wood. Take out the following day, wipe off any excess oil and leave to dry.

Whatever you do, don't be tempted to store oily rags in bundles in hot sheds as they can easily combust. Instead, you should either keep them in a tin, with a lid, somewhere cool, or spread them out to dry between uses.

Sharpening

I quite often buy old tools from markets, as I like the feel, weight and look of them. Properly sharpened, they can often outperform many modern equivalents, but they do need to be sharp. And that goes not just for the obvious cutting tools – secateurs, shears, knives – but also hoes, spades and forks. Luckily, with the right equipment and knowledge it's a relatively straightforward task.



Reshaping a cutting edge

Dan used a wet and dry bench grinder to reshape the worn blade on my spade. It's a useful piece of kit if you're sharpening a lot of tools at once, especially if these are heavy duty blades, such as those on a lawn mower, or if the edge is really out of shape. To get back to a true edge, draw a straight line across the blade, and grind down to it, by resting the spade on the guide and gently pressing it into the rotating grinding stone.

Be wary of sparks when you're using a dry grit stone, and always use protective eyewear and gloves. You also need to be careful of the heat generated by the friction, which can take the temper out of the steel. Between grindings, plunge the blade in water to keep the heat down, or use the finer grade whetstone, which runs through a trough of water and takes material away more slowly – and can be used for the final sharpening too. After grinding back to the new line, a file should be used to remove any burrs, and give the spade a bevelled cutting edge.

Using a file

You shouldn't need to reshape your spade's blade too often, but it's a good idea to routinely sharpen its blade with a file. An efficient spade needs to be sharp enough to cut cleanly through earth or roots, but not so sharp that you risk injuring yourself. The bevel edge of a spade is on the top side: the side that carries the soil when you lift it up. Before you start, you need to make sure your spade's blade is free of all rust as this will dull the file. Use steel wool to remove any rust, and once the blade is clean, clamp the spade securely by the handle to a worktop or in a vice, with the lifting side facing up.

Using a flat bastard mill file, held at handle and tip, push it forwards – a file has teeth that face forward and cut only in one direction – across the edge. Once you've got an even bevel edge (this should be 45 degrees unless the original differs), clamp the spade's blade upright in the vice and run the file across the back edge a few times to remove any rough burrs (shown above).

Sharpening secateurs

After sorting out my spade, we turned our attention to my secateurs. It's good to sharpen secateurs regularly, especially after a heavy or prolonged period of use. A dull blade is frustrating and leaves ragged cuts on plants. For best results, you should use a diamond sharpener or sharpening stone.

Before you start, remove any sap that has built up on the inside of the blade and wipe the steel with an oily rag. Then hold the open secateurs in your left hand and run your sharpener over the bevel edge of the blade at 23 degrees (or follow the original angle). Turn them over and, with the sharpener flat against the blade, clean up the inside edge, removing any small burrs.

It can be tricky, but it's worth persevering as with some practice you'll find you get the feel of the bevel angle right. Once you're satisfied with the blades, lightly oil the moving parts. Apply saddle oil to leather holsters, which helps to keep them supple and looking cared for.

looking after garden tools





Handles

The most likely part of a tool to break is the handle. This happens less often if the tool has been well looked after – kept inside, cleaned and oiled – but it's still going to happen occasionally, especially if undue pressure is put on a spade for example. Fortunately, replacement handles are available and, using a few basic bits of equipment to fit them, the tool can be given a new lease of life.



Removing the rivet

Dan helped me replace several handles that had seen better days, and in each case he began by removing the rivet. Tools usually have a rivet, that holds the metal blade and the wooden shaft together. You need to drill out the rivet to release the broken handle, and make way for a new rivet. Holding the tool securely in a vice, mark the old rivet with a centre punch and drill away the head of the rivet. Using the punch and a hammer, knock the remainder of the rivet completely out. The old handle may come out easily, but if a broken bit remains, remove it carefully using a flat bit on a drill or an auger.

Check that the end taper on the new handle fits the metal shaft. In most cases the size and shape is fairly standard but you may need to sand the handle to shape if not, and then push the new handle in. Twist it to line up the handle with the tool head and, with the tool end on a firm surface, tap in the handle firmly with a mallet.

Securing the handle

Measure the handle at the point of the rivet and cut the new rivet with a hacksaw so that its length will protrude by 3mm. Drill through the rivet hole and handle, and line up the new rivet. Knock the rivet head through the handle with a hammer, then turn the tool over and, supporting the head of the rivet on a solid metal base (an anvil is ideal), hit it firmly with the flat side of a ball peen hammer. Then hit it repeatedly with the ball peen end – a process known as peening the rivet. The end the rivet mushrooms out giving you a slightly domed head that holds everything in place, sitting neatly with the surrounding metal.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Many thanks to Daniel Back for his help and advice with this feature. Dan doesn't offer a professional tool repair and maintenance service, however, he does run a gardening and design business. Visit daniel-back.com for details.

If you don't want to sharpen tools yourself, many manufacturers offer a sharpening service.

Felco offers a full service for its secateurs for £19.99, felco.com

You can find equipment mentioned here at many good hardware stores, and for an extensive range of handles (of varying sizes and shapes) take a look at bulldoghandtools.co.uk

Small tools

Although the handles of some small tools can also be fitted with rivets (especially if they have a pulling action, such as a hand hoe), most are more simply held by the splaying of the metal shaft of the tool as it is firmly tapped into the handle.

Dan lost one of his favourite tools (the bronze trowel, shown above) in a client's garden for more than a year. When he finally found it, the handle had cracked. The manufacturer sent out a replacement, which was fitted by a sharp tap to the top of the handle with a mallet, while the point of the trowel was held upright on a wooden work top. □



A plantsman's paradise

Hermannshof in Germany is no ordinary public park. In the early 1980s it became a trial garden to showcase modern planting ideas and found itself at the forefront of the New Perennial Movement. Over the next six pages we take a detailed look at the planting combinations and reflect on the history of this innovative garden

WORDS NOËL KINGSBURY PHOTOGRAPHS CLAIRE TAKACS



In brief

Name Hermannshof.

What Private trial and exhibition garden, functioning as a public park.

Where Weinheim, Germany.

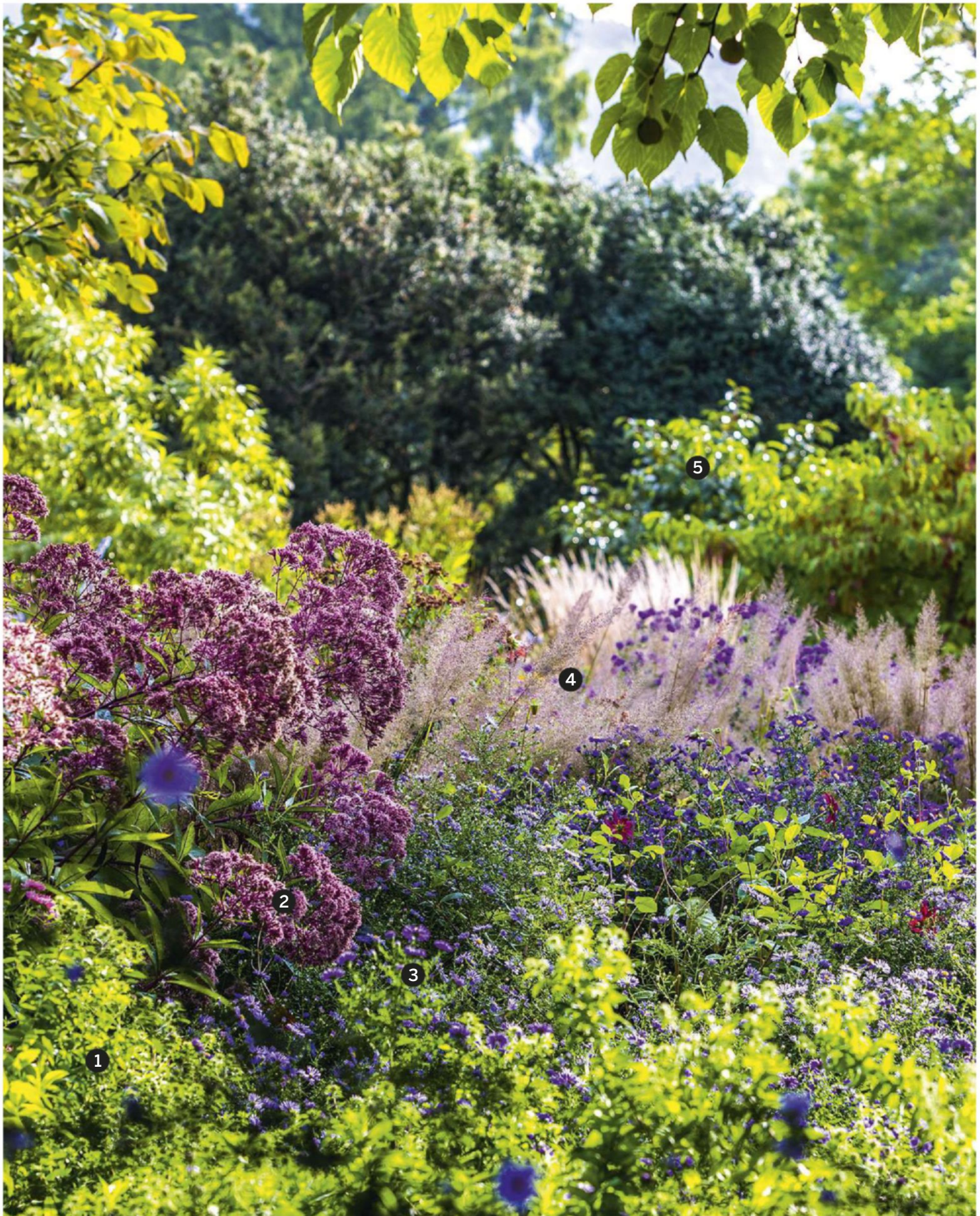
Soil Medium to dry, loamy sand (pH 6.9 -7.1).

Size Five and a half acres.

Climate Continental with winters that are slightly cooler than the UK and summers that are hotter.

Hardiness rating USDA 8a.

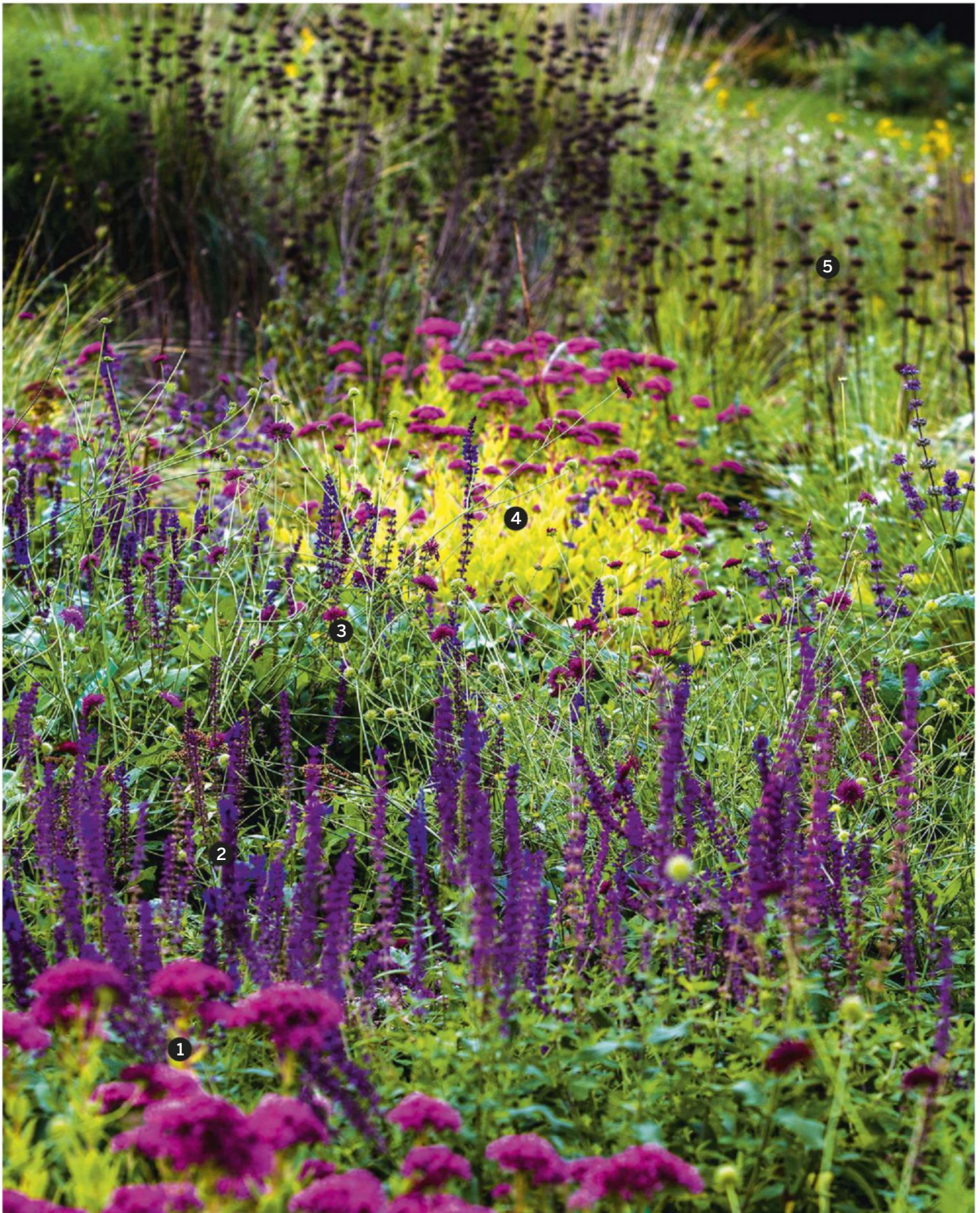
While many public parks are dominated by large lawns, at Hermannshof it's the planting that takes centre stage, with narrow strips of grass winding their way through vast, densely planted borders.



Plant combinations from Hermannshof

Purple prairie

Aster divaricatus (1) is one of the few asters that thrives in light shade and is worth growing for its fresh-green foliage alone. Pink heads of *Eupatorium maculatum* (Atropurpureum Group) 'Riesenschirm' (2) set off the blue *Symphiotrichum novi-belgii* 'Stölzle' (3), an old cultivar that is now a rarity, but vigorous and reliable. Behind this is *Calamagrostis brachytricha* (4), a good grass for combining with perennials as its height and narrow shape create an excellent backdrop. The tree is *Sassafras albidum* (5), which turns a fiery orange and yellow later in autumn.



Colour explosion

In one of the oldest plantings at Hermannshof, the vivid pink *Sedum 'Herbstfreude'* (1) rubs up against the sultry purple-blue of *Salvia nemorosa* (2). This flowers in June, but will bloom again in September if cut to ground level after flowering, and its rich colour contrasts well against the pink of the sedum and the deep-magenta scabious, *Knautia macedonica* (3). Behind another clump of *Sedum 'Herbstfreude'* is *Phlomis russeliana* (5), which flowers in early summer but retains good, strong seedheads that add interest for the remainder of the year.



Singing the blues

This area is a 'wet prairie' habitat where colourful asters are given a free rein. The pale aster-like *Boltonia asteroides* var. *latisquama* (1) and the tall grass *Miscanthus sinensis* (2), provide a neutral background against which the asters can shine. The rich blue-purples and pinks you see here are unnamed seedlings of *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae* (3, 4, 5), a naturally variable aster species. In front is *Spartina pectinata* 'Aureomarginata' (6), an extremely vigorous wetland grass. Behind is a dry area, with a silver-leaved *Santolina chamaecyparissus* (7).



Bright and beautiful

This colourful border has a fertile, moderately moist soil. The Korean feather reed grass *Calamagrostis brachytricha* (1) gives the whole border a light feel. There's a lively interaction between long-term elements (asters in blues and purples) and short-term elements, such as the non-hardy orange *Dahlia coccinea* (2), which is an annual addition. The deep-blue aster is *Symphyotrichum novi-belgii* 'Schöne von Dietlikon' (3), an old and very reliable cultivar from a Swiss nursery, which sits alongside the purple-pink *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae* 'Rudelsburg' (4).



The garden office looks out over glorious borders.



Hermannshof's director, Cassian Schmidt.

It's easy to think of Hermannshof as merely a nice public park, with lawns, borders and big trees. But those borders are heaven for plant lovers, notable not only for the many wonderful and unfamiliar plants they hold, but for the way those plants are arranged in striking combinations at all times of year. Even non gardeners might soon notice there's an awful lot going on in those borders. Ranging from high-energy perennial plantings to more naturalistic combinations, Hermannshof's borders have been designed to suit a host of different habitats: from pond edges to dry, stony areas and all levels of shade.

Combinations is the key word here. The German tradition in planting design is very different to our own. German planting has always been much more about plant communities – an approach that lends itself to a more naturalistic appearance and one that is shown to great effect throughout the borders at Hermannshof.

Once home to the Freudenberg family, who still part-own the gardens and continue to fund them, Hermannshof opened as a trial garden in 1983 following a major redesign by the landscape architect Hans Luz, with planting plans by Urs Walser. Walser, who became the trial garden's first director, wanted to showcase the principles of planting design developed by Professor Richard Hansen. His idea was to create communities of plants, mostly perennials, that would look naturalistic and provide a long period of interest.

Over time the trial garden has evolved into a glorious public park, now under the directorship of Cassian Schmidt. Cassian took over in 1998, and started by replacing one of the lawns with a large area of prairie-style planting, divided into a series of habitats to reflect the enormous diversity of prairie habitat. More recently, he has created what he calls a 'temperate monsoon forest', inspired by areas of China, Japan and the Russian far east, where rainfall is highest in the summer. "It has an almost subtropical appearance," says Cassian. Here he grows hardy herbaceous aralias, bold-leaved hostas, rodgersias, cimicifugas, arisaemas, autumn anemones, several polygonatum and large-leaved magnolias, with a ground layer of *Hakonechloa macra* and sedges.

In late summer the biggest impact is from the borders near the house with their colourful array of perennials, including asters,

clump-forming, non-invasive goldenrods (*Solidago speciosa*, *S. rigida*, and *S. caesia*), rudbeckias, silphiums, ratibidas and heleniums along with enough large grasses to carry interest well into the winter.

"These are all competitive species, many of them prairie plants," says Cassian, stressing that with so much attention in gardening currently focused on drought-tolerant plants, there has been a tendency to lose interest in plants for averagely moist, fertile borders. "These are long-lived plants," he says, "and can be left for years." There are also smaller areas planted with annuals – mostly with an informal loose-growing habit: dahlias, amaranthus, salvias.

Beneath Hermannshof's beauty there is a serious sense of purpose. Cassian, who is now Professor of Planting Design at Geisenheim University, brings his students here to map out the vegetation and analyse its progress through the seasons. The plant knowledge gained at Hermannshof also feeds into the design of 'Mixed Plantings': planting formulae that are increasingly being used for larger-scale projects in central and eastern Europe. More than 30 of these mixes, five of which have been designed by Cassian based on prairie species, are now available through wholesale nurseries.

But for Cassian, the greatest importance of Hermannshof lies in its maintenance work. "One of the advantages of having constant financing," he says, "is that we can continually assess and analyse what we do." The garden's six staff members (including one apprentice) keep a careful log of their time so that by the end of the year Cassian can tell how many staff hours per square metre each one of the plantings has taken.

If you want to see the future of planting design – naturalistic, visually rich, complex, biodiverse, sustainable and low maintenance, but also exuberant and fun – there is no better place to come. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Hermannshof, Babostraße 5, 69469 Weinheim, Germany.

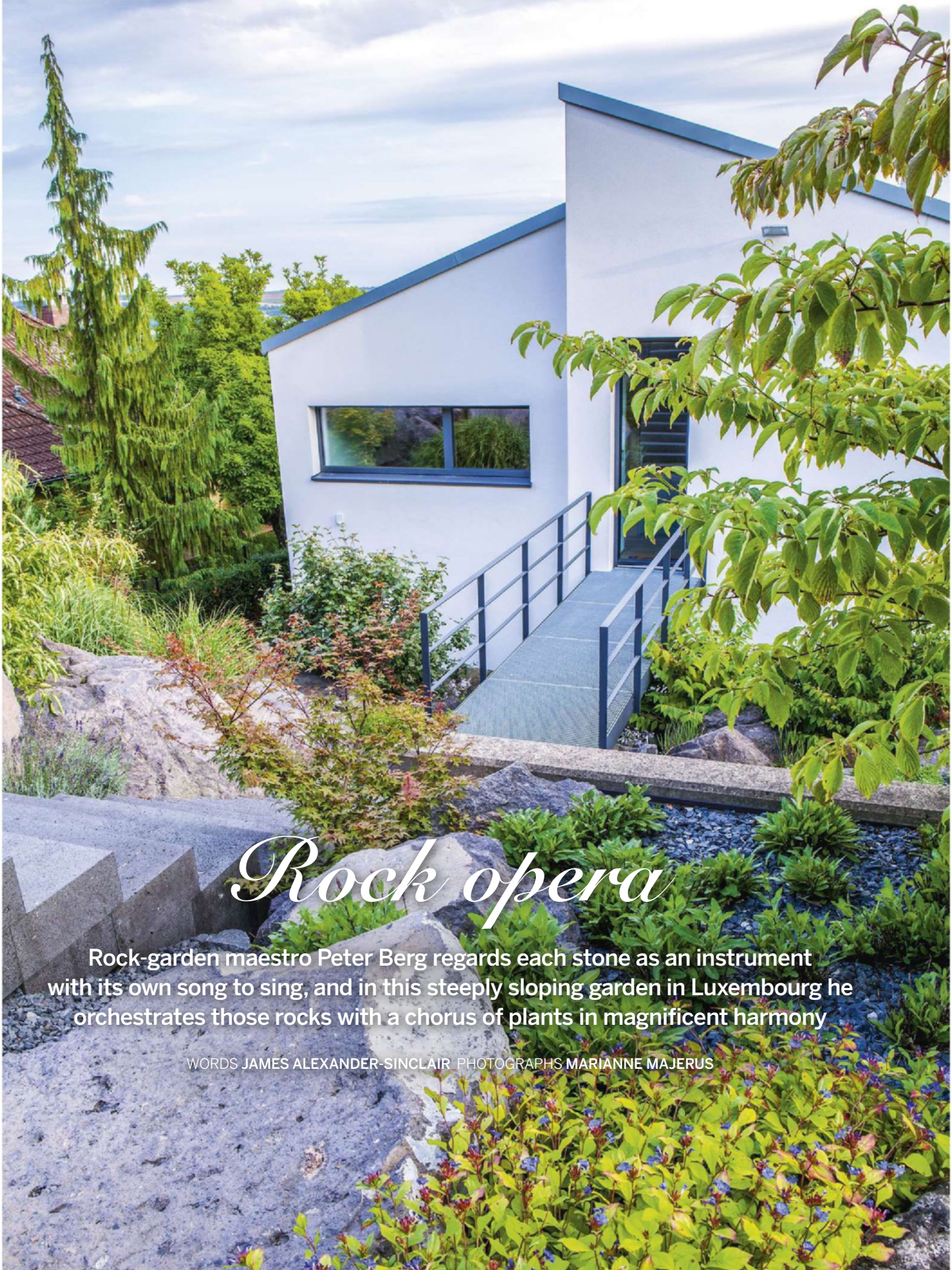
Tel +49 6201 13652.

Website sichtungsgarten-hermannshof.de



Feather light

This patchwork of airy grasses and colourful perennials is what greets Cassian each morning when he looks out of his office window. Grasses, including *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Graziella' (1) and *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' (2) provide interest well into the winter. Solid structure is provided by the small tree, *x Chitalpa tashkentensis* (3), while the colour palette is dominated by the greens and subtle pinks of the grasses with occasional splashes of yellow from *Solidago rugosa* 'Fireworks' (4) and the white of *Anemone x hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert' (5).



Rock opera

Rock-garden maestro Peter Berg regards each stone as an instrument with its own song to sing, and in this steeply sloping garden in Luxembourg he orchestrates those rocks with a chorus of plants in magnificent harmony

WORDS JAMES ALEXANDER-SINCLAIR PHOTOGRAPHS MARIANNE MAJERUS



In brief

What A seriously sloping modern rock garden.

Where Gutland, Luxembourg.

Size 750 square metres.

Street level is 11m higher than the garden's end.

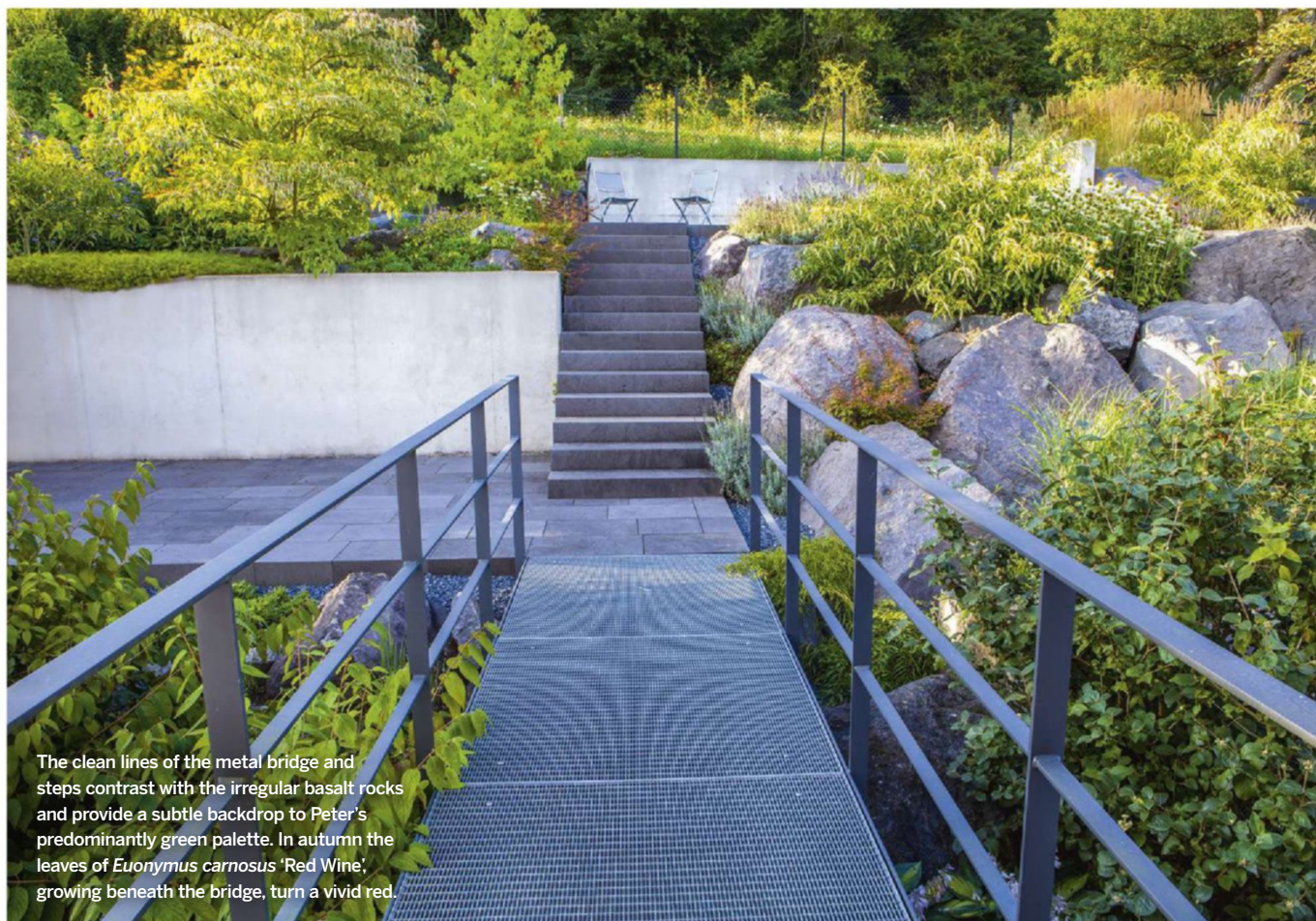
Soil Heavy clay.

Climate Cold winters with snow, hot summers.

Hardiness rating USDA 6.

Left Thanks to Peter's careful placement of basalt boulders and sympathetic planting scheme, the modern house appears almost to rise naturally out of a rocky mountain.

Using a variety of trees and grasses Peter has given the garden a strong structure to which the owners are beginning to add their own selection of perennial favourites.



The clean lines of the metal bridge and steps contrast with the irregular basalt rocks and provide a subtle backdrop to Peter's predominantly green palette. In autumn the leaves of *Euonymus carnosus* 'Red Wine' growing beneath the bridge, turn a vivid red.

Ever since the first man swung the first mattock into the first divot we've been battling with slopes. The problem was solved by ancient civilisations by simply building walls and making flat terraces upon which they could grow rice or wheat or even flowers. The centuries have passed and technology has worked wonders but, no matter how sophisticated society may have become there will always be gardens with slopes. This is particularly true in Europe where there are more, and bigger, mountains. Fortunately the Europeans also have a genius in their midst. And that genius is Peter Berg.

When Peter started out 30 years ago, rock gardens were often little more than a heap of broken paving stones that looked more like dogs' graves than a mountain; a misguided homage to the great edifices built by, for example, Joseph Paxton at Chatsworth – updated so convincingly by Dan Pearson at this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show. It is a style of gardening that sadly seems to have lost its popular appeal – until you spend time with Peter.

Peter was brought up in the Eifel region of Germany where the Ardennes meet the Rhenish Massif in a great geological crescendo that produces amazing veins of great stone. Rock is in his blood and he uses great boulders of basalt in his gardens. This project in the Gutland region of Luxembourg is a case in point. "I was brought in before the house was built," says Peter, "which is the best time as it means that we can co-operate with both the architect and the client to make sure that both garden and house join together well."

At that point the plot was a bit of empty grassland sloping steeply up a hill, but by the time Peter began landscaping, a crisp, modern house had been built and the garden was basically a 10m-deep hole. Peter's job was to fill that hole with a garden working up from the house. He began, as he always does, with a visit to the quarry where he chooses his rocks. These are then ferried to the site and lifted high over the house by crane to where Peter stands looking at the rocks as they fly over his head deciding where each should ▶

Suggestions for slopes

Most gardens have some sort of level change, which can usually be solved by steps or slopes. For more challenging slopes there are other techniques to try

- **Terracing** is the simplest solution. Break the slope into a series of plateaux with retaining walls of brick, stone, gabions or sleepers.
- If you want to try replicating Peter's rockwork technique, make sure your **rocks are as big as you can find** – and move. In the garden set them in a rough approximation of how they were in the ground. Make sure that the layers run the right way.
- If planning a grassy slope **make sure you can mow it safely**. Steps should always be as generous as possible. Make them wide and deep, which will also provide you with space to place containers on each of the treads.
- Planting works well on slopes as it **gives extra height** to whatever is at the top, but when planning bear in mind that the top of any slope will always be drier than the bottom.



Large boulders, softened by clumps of *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Kleine Silberspinne', *Panicum virgatum* 'Heiliger Hain' and *Echinacea purpurea* 'Alba', give the feel of a rugged mountainous slope.



The grey of the steps is reflected in the blue of *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Munstead' and contrasted with the glossy green leaves of *Euonymus carnosus* 'Red Wine'.



The sloping site allows Peter to play with different heights, creating layers of interest using only a limited palette of mostly trees and grasses with occasional perennials.

▷ go. In this garden he built up layer upon layer of interlocking rock over the course of six days. There is no concrete; it is basically an enormous dry-stone wall.

Within this wall he has created flat areas for planting, terraces and steps, made from cut basalt slabs, a vegetable garden, beehives and beautifully placed trees. The rocks also form pathways through the garden – nowhere is inaccessible – and flat rocks make seating areas and tables. Peter describes the process rather beautifully: “Each stone is like an instrument, which plays its own song; my job is to bring them all together like an orchestra so that there is harmony between rocks and, equally importantly, in the spaces in between.” These spaces are planted with a limited palette of plants. Peter draws no planting plans, instead he talks to nurseries and wanders around choosing each plant beginning with some magnificent trees and going down to simple combinations of perennials. “I like to plant a grass and intersperse it with one or two perennials – always using only green and the colours of the sky – for example *Pennisetum alopecuroides* ‘Hameln’ with *Geranium* ‘Philippe Vapelle’ and the later flowering *Ceratostigma willmottianum*.”

All of Peter’s gardens have this extraordinary balanced calm. Enormous lumps of ancient stone have been sensitively teased into place so that they not only form beautiful gardens but also seem to have been returned to the earth where they will sit contentedly watching the flowers grow for the next million years. Like I said, the man’s aw genius. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Peter Berg, GartenLandschaft Berg & Co. GmbH.

Tel +49 2642 90 29 70.

Website gartenlandschaft.com

Peter’s recommendations for rock-garden planting

Cornus controversa

A great tree that Peter likes for its tiered shape. With some judicious pruning, it can be remarkably transparent. 9m. USDA 5a-8b[†].

Quercus palustris

The North American pin oak grows far better in continental climates than other oaks and has richer autumn colour. 12m. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

Gleditsia triacanthos f. inermis

Another tree that is quite transparent, although Peter only likes the green varieties, never the yellow. Works particularly well as a multi-stem. 12m. USDA 3a-8b.

Miscanthus sinensis ‘Adagio’

A small and compact ornamental grass that is fantastic in snow. 3.6m. USDA 5a-9b.

Pennisetum alopecuroides ‘Hameln’

Perfect for softening the edges of rocks. Peter uses it a lot with sky-coloured perennials. 90cm. USDA 5a-9b.

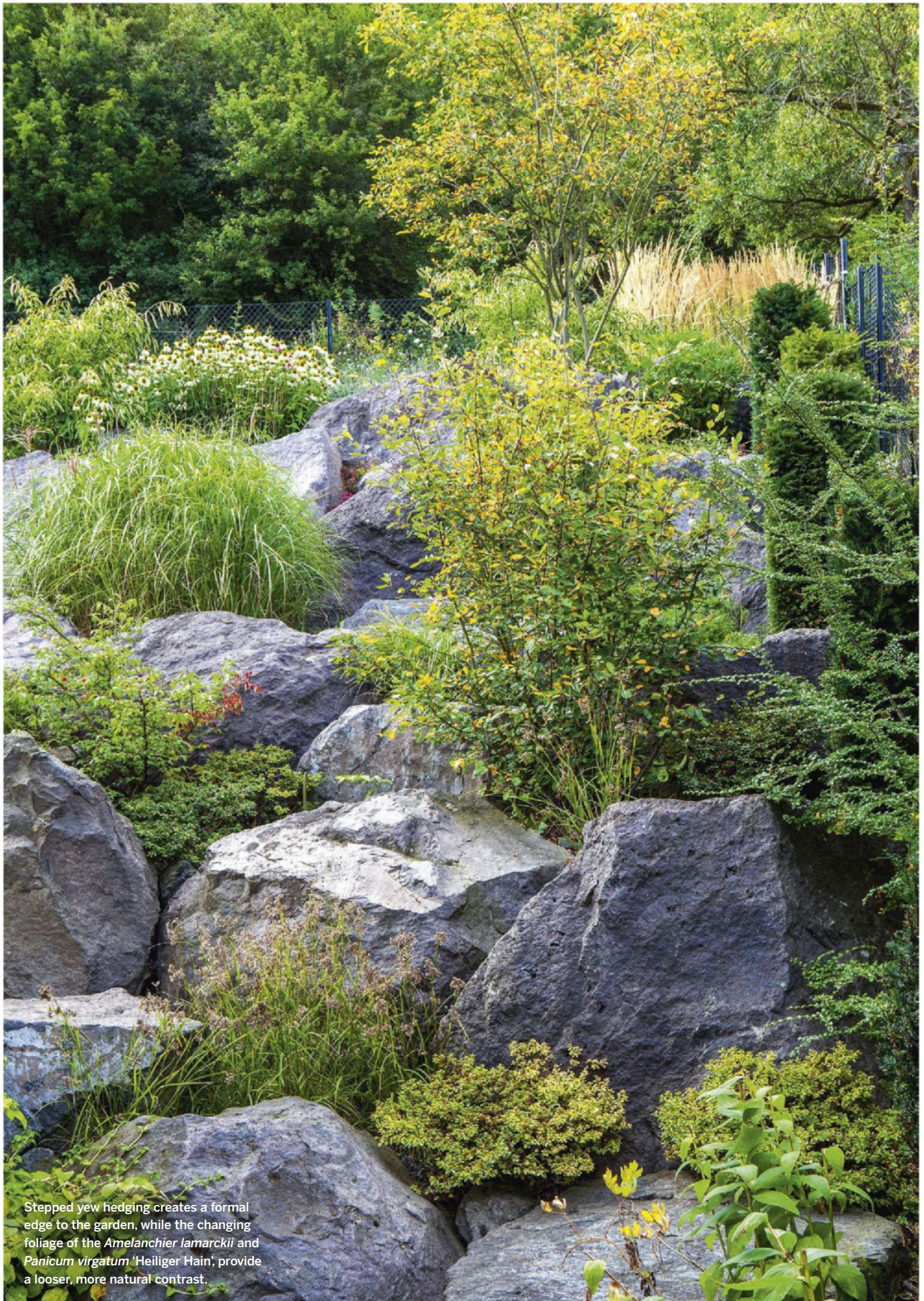
Salvia nemorosa ‘Caradonna’

A perennial that requires no staking is a bonus for Peter as he says he has no time for that sort of thing. 60cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

Herniaria glabra

Provides excellent cover for tree roots and as rock edging. Pretty much indestructible. 15cm. USDA 7a-11.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



Stepped yew hedging creates a formal edge to the garden, while the changing foliage of the *Amelanchier lamarckii* and *Panicum virgatum* 'Heiliger Hain', provide a looser, more natural contrast.

COOL DOWN

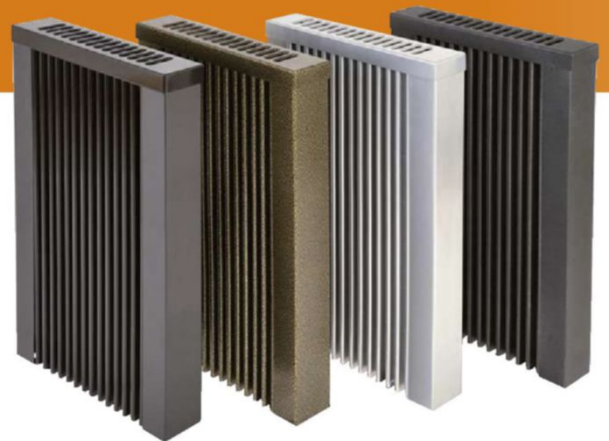
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URBAN GREENING

Garden in the city

London's newest Sky Garden has opened at the top of Crossrail Place, a shopping development that stretches for 300 metres along the north dock of Canary Wharf, above the Crossrail Station (still under construction). The partially enclosed lattice timber roof was designed by Foster + Partners to draw in light and rain. Many of the plants chosen by landscape architect Gillespies are native to countries visited by ships of the West India Dock Company, which once unloaded goods at the site.



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AWARD

Brownfield transformation

The sensitive landscaping that surrounds The Center for Sustainable Landscapes in Pittsburgh has earned Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens (where the centre is located), and Philadelphia-based landscape architects Andropogon

Associates the APLD award for Landscape Designer of the Year 2015. The landscape, on a former brownfield site in the grounds of the botanical gardens, surrounds the educational building. It is planted with native species and includes a rain garden and a lagoon.



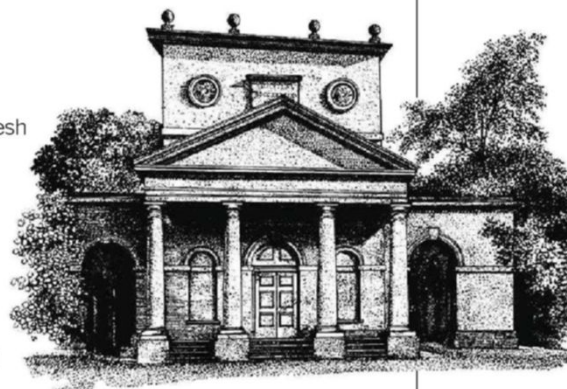
PAVING THE WAY

Dutch company Schellevis supplies slabs and stones made from sustainably produced concrete. The pumice-like texture of the slabs can be used in a variety of ways in the garden, such as paving, coping, steps or as a solid block for a wall or bench and comes in a range of colours including the new taupe and cream. schellevis.nl

GARDEN HISTORY

National Trust appeal for funds

The restoration of Stowe's historic landscape gardens in Buckinghamshire continues with a fresh appeal for funds. Work is needed to repair the façade of the Temple of Friendship (damaged by fire in the early 1800s), to reinstate replicas of the original statues in the Grecian Valley, and to open up areas not currently seen by visitors. An anonymous donor has pledged to match any funds raised. nationaltrust.org.uk/stowe-appeal



DESIGN COMPETITION

Triumphal celebration

This month the Queen will receive a framed copy of the winning design in the Triumphal Arch competition, organised by the Worshipful Company of Chartered Architects, RIBA and the Commonwealth Association of Architects to celebrate her becoming the longest reigning monarch in British history on 9 September. The winning entry, by Chris Dyson Architects, includes a peace garden on the elevated viewing deck. It's been suggested that the arch might be installed at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, as a focal point or an entrance.



ART IN THE GARDEN

Making history

A summer exhibition by British sculptor Anish Kapoor has been raising eyebrows in the historic gardens at Versailles. Five dramatic, and challenging, works that employ swirling water, distorting mirrors, a wax-firing cannon and vast pieces of rusted steel are on display around the palace gardens, including *Sectional Body preparing for Monadic Singularity 2015* (shown below). One piece, the sexually suggestive *Dirty Corner*, which faces the château has caused controversy in France, and even provoked an act of vandalism.

However, Catherine Pégard, president of the Palace of Versailles, is confident visitors will appreciate the works. "The visitor at Versailles will witness the dualities of the artist's work: heaven and earth, visible and invisible, inside and outside, shadow and light," she says. "The originality of this exhibition, what makes it unique, even to those who have long been familiar with Kapoor's work around the world, is that in Versailles his vision meets an imagination set in stone by history." Until 1 November, chateauversailles.fr



GARDEN BUILDING

Shed retreat

The Garden Rooms, by Alex Bank, Sam Casswell and Tom Graham, has won Hauser & Wirth's Shed Project competition for young architects to design an outbuilding for resident artists at the gallery's studios in Somerset. The design, an informal timber outhouse inspired by Dylan Thomas's writing hut, which overlooks the Taf estuary at Laugharne, has a stepped roofline and two rooms: one uninsulated for possible use as an external studio, the other a more intimate space for writing, drawing or contemplation.

ART AND CRAFT

The pod-shaped hide designed by Sarah Keyser and made by willow sculptor Carole Beavis for the City Twitchers Garden at Hampton Court Palace Flower Show created a striking element in the award-winning white garden. The structure is woven on a steel frame for extra strength. Carole creates bespoke willow pieces at her Derbyshire workshop. carolebeavis.co.uk.



Notebook

- The 15th **Serpentine Gallery Pavilion** in London, designed by José Selgas and Lucía Cano, is a many-tentacled plastic construction in rainbow colours, which is entered through a series of tunnels and arches. Until 18 October, serpentinegalleries.org
- Norfolk-based designer **Tamara Bridge** won the 7th RHS Young Designer of the Year for her 'English Country Garden' at RHS Flower Show Tatton Park in July. She started with a year's training at the royal garden at Sandringham, under the Historic and Botanic Garden Bursary Scheme (hbgbs.org), and now runs her own design practice.
- A competition to design a park for the 21st century to celebrate the work of **Joseph Paxton** (who designed some of the earliest public parks), has been launched by the Landscape Institute North West in conjunction with the MMU Landscape Architecture department. More information at northwest.landscapeinstitute.org
- Book now for the seventh **Orticolario**, the autumn flower show at Villa Erba, Cernobbio, Lake Como. Flowers of the hydrangea family will be the featured blooms. 2-4 October, orticolario.it
- The **Laskett Gardens** in Herefordshire, one of the largest private formal gardens created in England since 1945, is to be bequeathed to the charity Perennial by its owner Sir Roy Strong.

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1 Bright ideas

Coloured ribbons stretched over a tree branch form an open A-frame tent, which makes a stunning 'rainbow' play den. Furnished with a low table and child-sized chairs it becomes a magical space for children's role-play and here it provides a fabulous setting for a table at a wedding party.



MARIANNE WILSON PHOTOGRAPHY



Sarah Price is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers who won worldwide recognition for her designs for the 2012 Olympic Park.

Outdoor play areas

Do you always need to sacrifice style to create space for children to play? Not if you use the right plants and a little child-like imagination

WORDS SARAH PRICE



2

2 Round and round

Young children love following squiggles on the ground. This mown spiral, created by designer Anthea Gibson within the formal grounds of her garden at Westwell Manor, offers endless fun for children and looks beautiful all year round. It's also extremely easy to maintain.



3

3 Positive shapes

If you do want to separate off a play area, then rather than use conventional fencing, screen it with playful shapes or a change of level so children feel included. The caterpillar-like shape of this hedge forms an fun backdrop to rough grass and a tree swing.



4

4 Serpentine rill

In Douglas Reed's design for a Healing Garden at the Institute for Child and Adolescent Development in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a ribbon of water weaves through a series of spaces including a cave shelter, woodland, a small hill for climbing and a large glade for running. The rill is only 20cm wide with metal banks and pebbles on the bottom yet it unifies the whole design and provides a focus for play.

2 SARAH PRICE, 3 GAF PHOTOS/JULIETTE WADE, 4 GAF PHOTOS/JERRY HARPUR

After the great storm of 1987 many mourned the loss of much-loved veteran trees. But for my seven-year-old self, it triggered a bonanza in den building. It's a reminder that children see things differently to – and often more imaginatively than – adults.

As a gardener with young children, the idea of turning my garden into a playground is horrifying. But it needn't be that way. Just as adults enjoy a variety of garden rooms, children too are excited by thresholds, transitions and different moods. My two-year-old loves crawling out from a dark, shady hollow to a wide-open lawn. Running around and playing hide-and-seek among staggered beech

hedging is another favourite game. Each change in environment will create new associations and fantasies in the mind of a child. The trick is to think about space with child-like imagination.

Children can easily get bored of playing with the same toys. But if the toys are of their own invention they are infinitely variable. So the challenge is to provide children with adaptable objects and spaces. In this way a log can be a spaceship, sea monster or a Spanish galleon depending on the game. Abstract objects are often the best. Similarly, adaptable structures encourage imaginative play. At RHS Wisley a boundary fence of dead wood has been designed to be dismantled by den-building



5 Hideaway

Plants such as hazels and willow are ideal for creating hideaways, as they can be coppiced to replenish play features. This encourages ongoing ownership as the huts and tunnels can be adapted from year to year. This den, made out of lengths of dried bamboo, creates a fun contrast to the formal hedging.

6 Bird's nest shelter

When designing hideaways I often look to contemporary artists, such as Patrick Dougherty who creates his awe-inspiring 'stickwork' sculptures from interwoven branches. This bird's nest shelter by Jayson Fann is more modest in scale, but I love the way the branches are all interwoven in a clockwise circulating pattern to frame the entrance.

7 Minimal style

Rather than try to hide a swing and climbing frame, the owners of this garden have chosen to place them at the centre of their minimal design. The boundary wall has been turned into a blackboard, completing the minimalist composition and offering more opportunities for imaginative play.



5 SARAH PRICE, 6 DREW KELLY, 7 MAAYKE DE RIDDER, DESIGNER KRISTOF VAN DEN BOUWHUYSEN, OWNER FRANK VAN MECHELEN

▷ children. The sticks and branches make their way into simple pyramid frames built for improvisation. This idea can be easily adapted at home using pea sticks and brightly coloured strips of fabric. Similarly, a long, low table and some little chairs roughly sawn out of logs would make a perfect setting for children's role-play and can double up as a place to picnic for adults as well.

I often use ornamental grasses in and around play spaces as many species are tolerant of a wide range of growing conditions and also of trampling and footballs: *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Anemanthele lessoniana*, *Sesleria autumnalis*, *Luzula nivea* and *L. sylvatica* are suitable examples. Threading other

plants through a grass matrix for vertical accent and colour is striking; I've used *Carex buechananii* en masse dotted with scarlet potentillas and orange geums in a well-drained, sunny spot around a sunken sand pit. Knoll Gardens, stocks a wide range of unusual grasses for tough ground cover, including the drought-tolerant *Sesleria caerulea*, which grows in tidy low mounds, and *Carex praegracilis*, a Californian native that can cope with foot traffic in dry sun and shade.

Often it's too shady under a tree canopy for mown grass. Here try growing ground covers of tussocky sedges, such as *Carex divulsula*, *Liriope muscari* or ferns, such as *Blechnum chilense*, that



8 CLIVE NICHOLS

8

8 Party time.

By varying the height of grass on different areas of a lawn you can experiment with a variety of ground patterns to create a series of temporary and constantly changing play areas. Here a bowls green, wiggly maze and running track have been created for a children's party. These grass patterns are easily achieved by adjusting the blade heights on your lawn mower.

Useful information

Knoll Gardens

Stapehill Rd, Hampreston, Wimborne BH21 7ND.
Tel 01202 873931,
knollgardens.co.uk
Offers a wide range of unusual grasses for tough ground cover.

RHS Garden Wisley

Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB.
Tel 0845 260 9000,
rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley
The RHS's flagship garden includes the Wild at Wisley play area for children.

can tolerate the inevitable wear beneath a swing and look good. Low, evergreen ground covers are striking with a network of small tracks running through. In the shade I use *Galium odoratum* interspersed with ferns and, in sunnier spots, alpine and cultivated strawberries with occasional fruiting bushes. Big tussock sedges and plants such as *Libertia* and *Aristea* are tough and suggest swampy, adventurous ground. Then there are majestic plants that evoke the tropics, such as *Gunnera* or giant-leaved magnolias. Smell too can be fun. I'm currently planting a forest of *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, a multi-stem tree with heart-shaped leaves that in autumn smell of candy floss. □

Be inspired

Take your inspiration for play areas from as many sources as possible, including pop-up play gardens in cities or images on online scrap books, such as Pinterest. One wide-ranging source of inspiration is the fascinating blog Playscapes (play-scapes.com), authored and edited by Paige Johnson. This details play projects across the globe from pre-1900 to the present day. It's packed with case studies on gardens created for play, natural playgrounds and contemporary designs for play equipment. Outlandish playgrounds designed by artists and innovative, 'playable sculpture' also regularly feature, alongside free project downloads.

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Garden of Rosemary Alexander, Principal EGS
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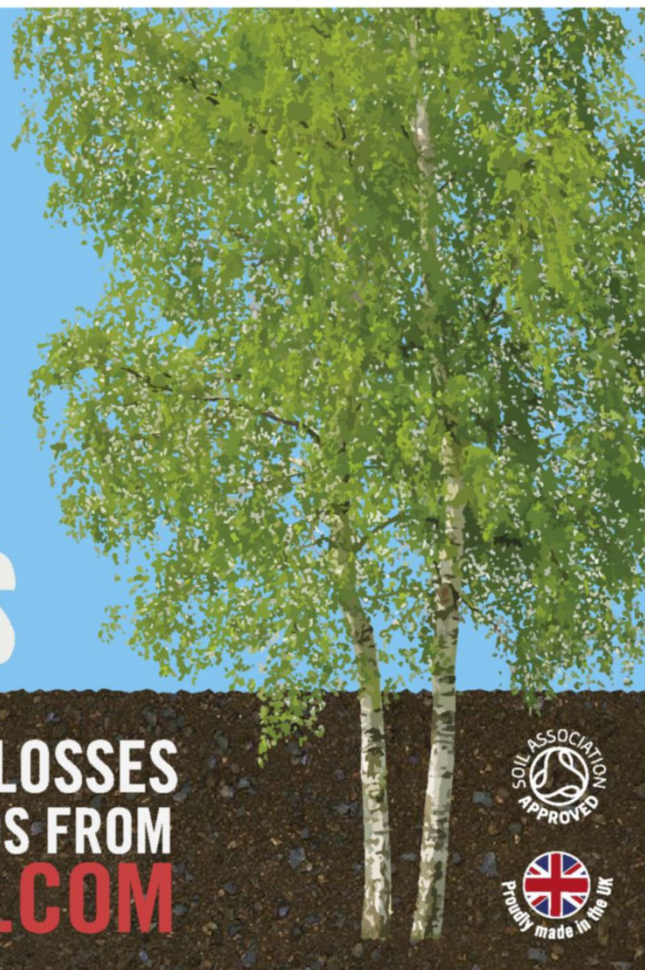
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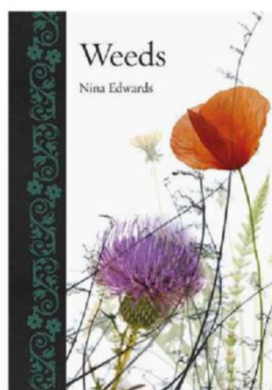
Book reviews, crossword, back issues, shop



Making cider vinegar from *Forgotten Ways*
for *Modern Days*, reviewed on page 100.

CATHERINE GRATWICKE

Book reviews



WEEDS

By Nina Edwards

Reaktion Books, £16
ISBN 978-1780234274

A stimulating historical, horticultural and cultural reassessment of the world's more rapacious plants, the much-maligned weeds.

Reviewer Caroline Beck is a garden writer and radio producer.

The very word has gardeners bristling with hostility and reaching for their flame guns, but this book regards those tenacious members of the plant family discerningly, valuing them as more than horrors to be obliterated. Nina Edwards deals with weeds not just as survival-of-the-fittest bullies, but as plants worthy of marvel and delight, wondering just why we loathe weeds so much when in other, less herbicide-happy, ages we cultivated them for medicine, clothing, fuel and valuable nutrition. She's not 'weedy' about weeds, but is clear-eyed about why they're so brutally successful and traces our own culpability in transporting their success across the planet, via horticultural acquisitiveness, global trade and ignorance in the pivotal part they play in the ecosystem.

Our attitude towards weeds ranges from blind prejudice to prudishness over their sexual

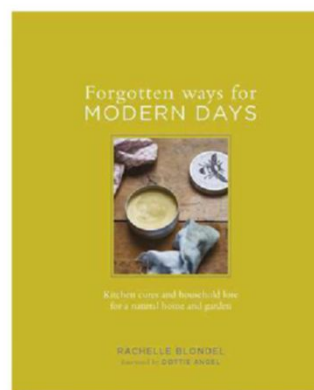
promiscuity. They defy categorisation and what was once a valuable plant can, in the wrong place, become an invasive weed in a matter of years. Think of Japanese knotweed, buddleja and *Rhododendron ponticum*. Equally a plant of dubious repute, such as purslane, which most of us have hoicked out of our soil, has been recently championed by vogueish chefs as being rich in omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants. I can testify that the book's recipe for ground elder quiche is not only delicious, but weirdly satisfying to both cook and eat.

My only complaint is that the obvious care that the author took with her research wasn't matched by the illustrations, some of which appear in the wrong chapter or are even repeated.

Despite this, it is an honest and wise attempt to untangle weeds and our complex reaction to them.

Book offer

RRP £16. Reader offer price **£14.40** including p&p*.



FORGOTTEN WAYS FOR MODERN DAYS

By Rachelle Blondel,
photography by
Catherine Gratwicke

Kyle Books, £14.99
ISBN 978-0857832290

A household compendium of kitchen cures and garden lore that makes use of natural products and inherited wisdom.

Reviewer Francine Raymond is an author and garden columnist.

Author Rachelle Blondel who creates 'handmade accessories and vintage whatnot', is co-author of previous top-seller *Granny Chic*. In this book she salutes homemakers, gardeners and kitchen alchemists who keep their lives in order with chemical-free solutions. Readers are encouraged 'to tend, grow and gather, and fill our days with joy'.

It's a lovely looking book reminiscent of days gone by, with a fabric cover, printed end papers and timelessly beautiful images. This compendium seduces you back to a time when most of us worked hard and made do with whatever came to hand, following recipes passed down for generations. From acne cures to stain removers, compost boosters to chicken feed, the criterion is that all should be gentle, free of packaging and natural.

Soothing chapters on remedies and cosmetics using garden herbs and plants are tempting and re-assuring, and

those on concocting homemade household products will encourage us to leave cleaning chemicals in the cupboard.

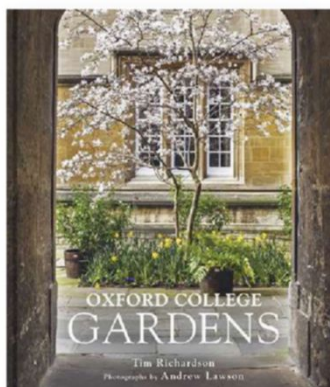
Plants are given a tonic of weeds and herbs macerated in water; compost is boosted with rainwater, glycerine, herbs and bark; and hens are fed on scrambled eggs, pumpkin seeds and porridge. The sentiment behind this advice is caring and based on time-honoured remedies. The pages on creating wildlife habitat and creating a sound ecosystem will be useful for beginners.

Inspirational, rather than instructive, tips on natural soil nourishment includes adding eggshells, wood ash, seaweed coffee grounds and Epsom salts, but the when, where and how much is left misted in time. But the message is fashionable and might actually slow down our busy, urban lives, green our daily household and garden tasks, and make our homes 'a little bit nicer' than they were before.

Book offer

RRP £14.99. Reader offer price **£12.99** including p&p*.

Book reviews



OXFORD COLLEGE GARDENS

By Tim Richardson, photography by Andrew Lawson

Frances Lincoln, £40
ISBN 978-0711232181

An inspiring, entertaining and often surprising account of the secret world of Oxford's college gardens.

Reviewer Ambra Edwards is an author and garden writer.

Anyone who has been lucky enough to study at Oxford, or who has children there, knows how important the college gardens are to students and staff alike – lively social spaces, but also deeply private zones for mental and spiritual refreshment.

Tim Richardson, himself an Oxford alumnus, explores some 30 of the college gardens, alongside the University Parks, the Botanic Garden, and a handful of institutions that are not, strictly, colleges.

He has delved deep into college accounts, consulted early guidebooks, mined letters, diaries and even unpublished watercolours, to uncover their history: to trace what happened, for instance, to Wadham's elaborate parterres, to speculate on the origins of the New College Mount (a political gesture?), to wonder whether Trinity's famous Baroque garden ever existed at all.

In this celebration of the 'variety and idiosyncrasy' of

Oxford's gardens, Richardson is never afraid to express his opinions. He is repelled by the overweening grandiloquence of Christ Church, disappointed by New College's 'lumpish' Mount. But his prose ignites where he allows himself to be enchanted. Entering Corpus Christi, he revels in a 'wonderful Eton Mess of a border'. He's delighted by the sense of adventure at Merton and Worcester, applauds Robin Lane Fox's resolutely anti-New Perennial border at New College, permits himself the disloyal wish that he had applied to Magdalen, where 'everything seems to be beautiful.'

Mouthwateringly photographed by Andrew Lawson, the book admirably illustrates the poetry and range of the gardens. Quite a few of these spaces remain closed to the public, and as, increasingly, the colleges contract out the care of these precious spaces, this is an important record of an imperilled gardening culture.

Book offer

RRP £40. Reader offer price £36 including p&p*.



PIERRE-JOSEPH REDOUTÉ. SELECTION OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS THE COMPLETE PLATES

By H Walter Lack and Werner Dressendörfer

Taschen Books, £99.99
ISBN 978-3836505154

An exquisite time-capsule of botanical painting from the age of Fragonard and Boucher.

Reviewer Katherine Swift is a garden historian and garden writer.

In 1827 Pierre-Joseph Redouté began to make a selection of his favourite images from among the 2,000 or more flower paintings he had created over his lifetime. The paintings were to be reproduced in large-scale folio format in his revolutionary colour stipple technique and would seal for posterity his title as 'the Raphael of flowers'. He was by then 68 and the great work would, he hoped, bring in royalties to supplement his meagre savings.

Over the next six years 144 plates appeared in 36 instalments. Included were less-well-known plants from as far afield as Australia, Central America, western China and the Cape of Good Hope, together with the harebells, pansies and other simple wild flowers of Europe – as well as a selection of the gorgeous plates of roses, lilacs and lilies from the first Empress of France Joséphine Bonaparte's garden at Malmaison, for which he was so famous.

Complete copies now change hands for £50,000 or more. It is therefore a delight to have all 144 plates available in a modern, full-size, more reasonably priced reproduction. There is also the bonus of a fascinating new preface by H Walter Lack (plant historian and director of Berlin's botanic garden) putting Redouté's work into historical context, together with contemporary illustrations of the major players and places (including portraits of both Joséphine and her garden). Valuable commentaries by Werner Dressendörfer face each botanical plate, with a brief history of each plant and its modern botanical name.

Though the choice of a rather darkly tinted and heavily ribbed paper for both text and plates somewhat undermines the delicate pointillist technique of Redouté's original luminous colour stipple images, and will not be to everyone's taste, the book will appeal to all those who love flowers.

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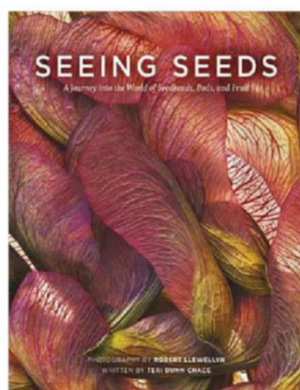
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Book reviews



SEEING SEEDS

By Teri Dunn Chace, photography
by Robert Llewellyn

Timber Press, £20
ISBN 978-1604694925

A visual feast of close-up images of seeds and seedheads with a richly informative and readable text.

Reviewer Noël Kingsbury is a writer and plantsman.

It is a delight to come across a book that manages to combine being both exquisitely beautiful as well as informative. Robert Llewellyn's photography takes us into the world of plant reproduction – all those endlessly creative pods, capsules and fruit that plants use to distribute their seeds, and through them their genes. The intense close-up style, the outcome of using a technology used in scientific research that combines multiple images, brings familiar plants and plant parts into high-definition focus, often revealing a beauty of which we are usually unaware. The text seeks to explain the basic botany behind seeds and the structures that hold and distribute them. It also covers many other aspects of the plants: horticultural and ecological. The author's own gardening knowledge comes across and there is a nicely

personal, anecdotal quality to a lot of the writing.

The book starts with some general background to seeds and the functions they perform. This part is particularly information heavy, and I found myself wanting some of the photographs to have some annotation and labelling – it would only have been a small sacrifice of the aesthetics. Plants are then grouped in sections: garden flowers, herbs and other useful plants, fruit and vegetables, and finally woody plants. There is a useful further reading list, which further confirms my admiration of this book as a serious enterprise, not just coffee-table eye candy. Reading this book will leave the reader with a greatly enhanced knowledge and appreciation of plants and their lives, as well as a sense of wonderment at so much natural beauty in unexpected places.

Book offer

RRP £20. Reader offer price **£18** including p&p*.

Other books

Four titles that help you to get the most from your favourite plants and learn a lot about them along the way.

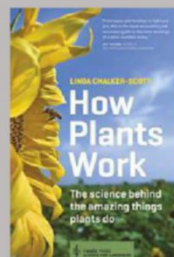


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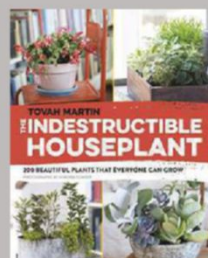


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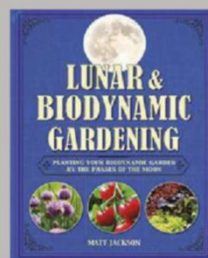


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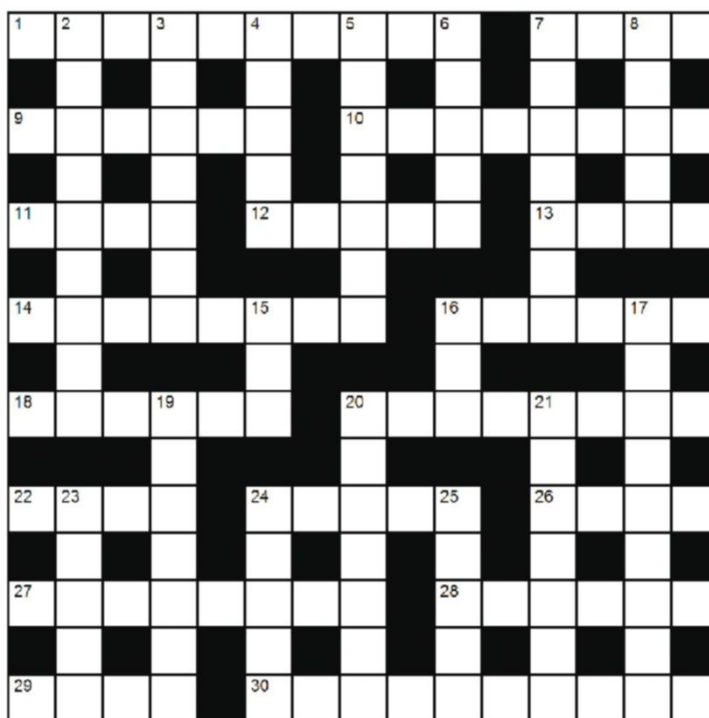
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Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Eg raspberries fruiting on previous season's growth – in *al fresco* arrangement (10)
7 A *Brassica* also called borecole (4)
9 See 7 down.
10 Scarlet-flowered bergenia with red winter stems that opens a musical? (8)
11 Sparkling wine in *Angelica's* tisane (4)
12 Spruce tree – maybe ask about it (5)
13 Sunken garden boundary? That's a laugh! (2-2)
14 Care a bit about cause of eg potato blackleg (8)
16 Maybe spruce collections? (6)
18 Native Japanese climber – variety of ikebana (not north) (6)
20 Remove withered flowers from plant (8)
22 Champion boxer's former name for a soil type (4)
24 Stops moving eg fence supports (5)
26 Luxuriant part of *Convolvulus* hedge (4)
27 Genus of the ironwood tree – sadly, a pair rot (8)
28 Eg send out new shoots after hard pruning (6)
29 A bit of tasty pear variety (4)
30 Its genus is *Vinca* – greater or lesser? (10)

DOWN

- 2 Petiole makes stake fall (4-5)
3 International catalogue of threatened species – left in driest rocks (3,4)
4 Evergreen tree fruits once affected by sun initially (5)
5 An orchid genus – turns into tea! (7)
6 Italian city ... initially sprayed insecticide everywhere – never again! (5)
7/9 down A place for growing vegetables, and gherkin etc possibly? (7,6)
8 Conifer, genus *Larix* (5)
15 Flooded valley enveloped by *Muscari armeniacum* (3)
16 Vegetable cut right off *Pyrus* fruit (3)
17 Honey fungus, for one (9)
19 The laurel: bare, yet cultivated (7)
20 Spade I ruined by river – misery! (7)
21 *Lost Cornish Gardens*: Hitchcock's first Ealing production! (7)
23 Like a mix of sand, clay, organic matter – odd anomaly without one! (5)
24 Transfer plant to larger container (3,2)
25 Half of a red summer fruit used for thatching material (5)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

AUGUST'S SOLUTIONS

ACROSS 6 Layer 8 Arum lily 10 Redoute 11 Madonna 12 Offshoots 14 Snail 16 Eucomis 18 Slabbed 20 Disco 22 Artemisia 24 Orchard 26 Manured 28 Tithonia 29 Scion.

DOWN 1 Dyed 2 Gazebo 3 Gummosis 4 Blades 5 Alan 6 Liriodendron 7 Rousham 9 Walled garden 13 Fuchs 15 Albus 17 Spalding 19 Almonds 21 Orache 23 Tomcat 25 Clip 27 Rain.



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Our shop website will be going live soon, but in the meantime you can order both ranges – along with our favourite baker's twine, a gorgeous tea towel and our Gardens Illustrated umbrella – by calling the number right or filling out the order form below. We hope you'll love all of these products as much as we do.

Juliet

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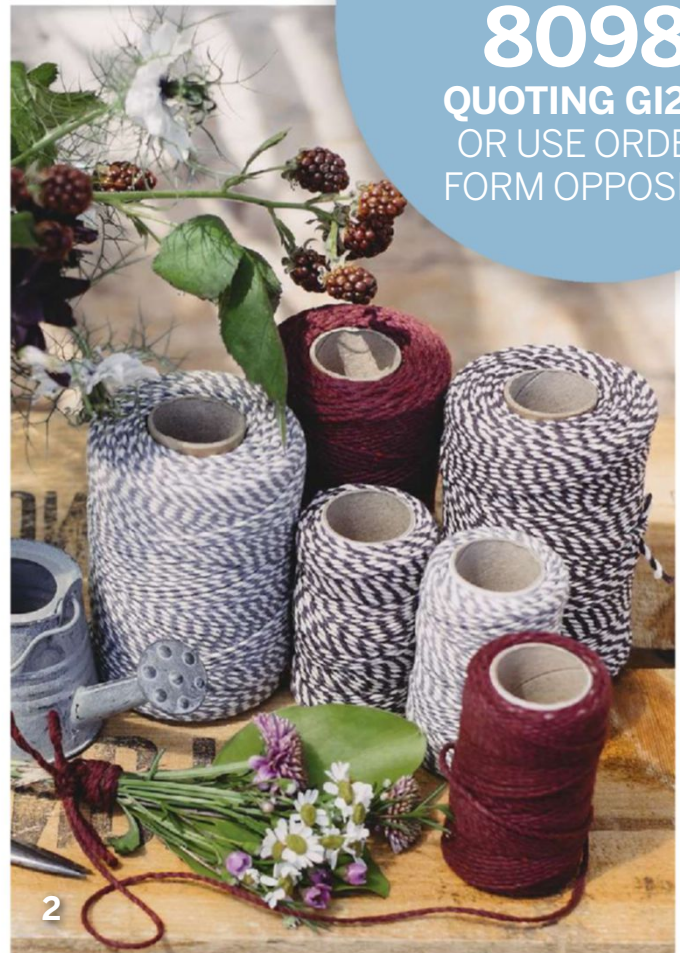
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Charles Collingwood (Brian Aldridge) reveals the art and craft of acting for the radio.

SECRET SOUNDS OF THE ARCHERS, 4.30PM

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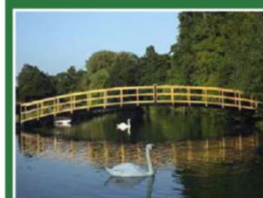
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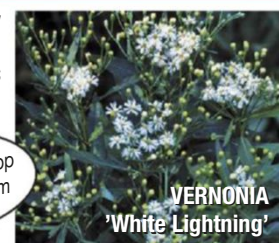
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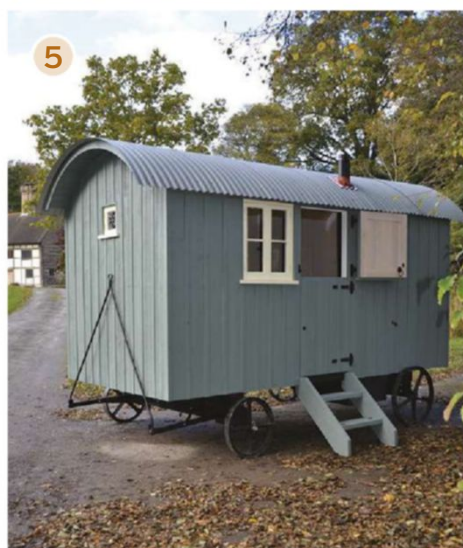
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The summer show

In Frank's cool garden, repeat flowering tends to be replaced by a long flowering season

WORDS FRANK RONAN ILLUSTRATION CELIA HART

In normal gardens, and where knowledgeable gardeners have cut them back after the first flush, heleniums will, by now, be flowering for the second time. In my Worcestershire garden the first flowering is still not quite over and I have a short debate with myself about shearing them now. If we have the most Indian summer in climactic history there might be a new bud or two before the frost. This used to be worth contemplating for the pleasure of a fantasy of hot September days, but now I get more sunshine than I want in California and it is the coolness of this garden I am coming to appreciate more. The very coolness that forestalls the heleniums from having their famous second wind.

There are other things which are supposed to come again if you chop them in time, but I forget what they are now because it was never worth my doing it. We are a consistent two degrees cooler than Tenbury at the bottom of the hill, all the year round, but it is enough to make things flower late and for a lot longer and never have time to flower again. To my mind this is better value than wringing a second show out of some poor plant, when the novelty has worn off for the year and you might be looking forward to the next thing. Even my repeat roses are barely finished their first bout when everyone else's are well into the second.

Where a second crop of foliage is to be had, on the other hand, I'm all for it. Oriental poppies look terrible once they've flowered and it is not difficult to be motivated to remove their scarecrow remains. If this is done completely and to ground level it won't be long before you are rewarded with fresh rosettes of the fern-like leaves, as good in their own right as many a plant grown for foliage.

Alchemilla mollis was once a fashionable plant. As late as the 1980s no pictorial garden book was complete



In my garden the first flowering of heleniums is still not quite over and I have a short debate with myself about shearing them now

without a close-up of a water drop held delicately on the gently hirsute corrugations of its leaf. I suppose then, because of that, too many people gave it a home without paying attention to the necessary piece of advice that went with it, which was that the whole of every plant must be shorn to the ground on the day that the foaming lime flowers are at their best. Failure to do so would result in the demure-looking lady's mantle overwhelming the garden in a single season.

You hardly see it anywhere now, and the last place I saw it in quantity was as the main ingredient of a meadow in the Kaçkar mountains of eastern Turkey where it provided a perfect background for wild

colchicums. It made me think that, one day, people will have forgotten the thuggery and begin to plant it again, only this time maybe they'll remember the timely annual massacre.

There is a bit of *Alchemilla* here, at the front among the rough plants that tough it out on the stone where cars are parked. I let it seed in hopes that it will make more of itself but it is barely hanging in there. Perhaps it doesn't like to be driven over or, more likely, our cool hilltop summers don't ripen enough seed for it.

For the best thing about the cool garden is that the flowers don't rush towards their demise. I can put out ladybird poppies and enjoy them for months while my poor friends on the plain are lucky if they get weeks before the display has to be torn up and replaced (the same goes for most annuals, if they consent to come into flower at all before the season's end). Perhaps if I were so cheated I too would be out deadheading and shearing and greedy for second wind. But as it is, I have nothing to do but admire, and twice as long to do it. □



Frank Ronan is a novelist who gardens in both the UK and USA.

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